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FUTURE

MAR. **SCIENCE FICTION**

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THE WAYWARD COURSE

by Randall Garrett

A
DOUBLE-ACTION
MAGAZINE

WAMPUM

by Sam
Merwin Jr.

THE SQUARE PEG

by Stephen Arr

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How I foxed the Navy

by Arthur Godfrey

The Navy almost scuttled me. I shudder to think of it. My crazy career could have ended right there. Who knows, I might still be bumming Chesterfields instead of selling them.

To be scuttled by the Navy you've either got to do something wrong or neglect to do something right. They've got you both ways. For my part, I neglected to finish high school.

Ordinarily, a man can get along without a high school diploma. Plenty of men have. But not in the Navy. At least not in the U. S. Navy Materiel School at Bellevue, D. C., back in 1929. In those days a bluejacket had to have a mind like Einstein's. And I didn't.

"Godfrey," said the lieutenant a few days after I'd checked in, "either you learn mathematics and learn it *fast* or out you go. I'll give you six weeks." This, I figured, was it. For a guy who had to take off his shoes to count



above ten, it was an impossible assignment.

I was ready to turn in my bell-bottoms. But an ad in a magazine stopped me. Here, it said, is your chance to get special training in almost any subject—mathematics included. I hopped on it. Within a week I was enrolled with the International Correspondence Schools studying algebra, geometry and trig for all I was worth.

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FUTURE

SCIENCE FICTION

Volume 4
Number 6
March
1954

Robert W. Lowndes

Editor

Novels

- THE WAYWARD COURSE** Randall Garrett 10
Obviously, this woman wasn't three thousand years old . . .
- WAMPUM** Sam Merwin, Jr. 58
One man realized the danger behind this playboy invasion . . .

Short Stories

- THE OLDFASHIONED SPACEMAN** Dave Dryfoos 28
Myron made history . . . but not in the way he had wanted!
- THE PAYOFF** Eando Binder 39
They must have been on an important mission — but what was it?
- THE SQUARE PEG** Stephen Arr 44
To the people of the 23rd Century, Al Rogers was a savage . . .

Departments

- DOWN TO EARTH (Where I talk, but your words are more important)** 6
- READIN' AND WRITHIN'** 27
Book reviews by Damon Knight and L. Jerome Stanton.
- INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION** Robert A. Madle 53
News, fan magazines reviews, and reminiscences of two decades back.
- SCIENCE FICTION ALMANAC** 57
- INDEX TO VOLUMES ONE TO FOUR** 77
- REMEMBERED WORDS** 80
- THE RECKONING & READERS PREFERENCE COLUMN** 98
Your ratings of the November issue, and a voting place for now.

Cover by Alex Schomburg

Interior Illustrations by Emsch, Freas, Luros, and Orban

FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION, March, 1954, published bi-monthly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass. under the act of March 3, 1879. Entire contents copyrighted 1954 by Columbia Publications, Inc. 25c per copy; yearly subscriptions \$1.50. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return, if found unavailable. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibility for their return. Printed in the U. S. A.

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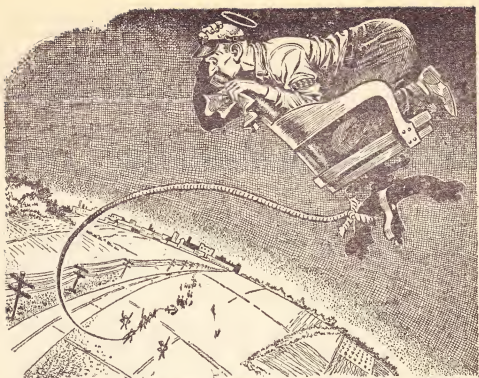
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The ABC's of
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Down To Earth

A Department of Letters and Comment

(Heading by Milton Luross)

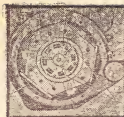
YOU'LL FIND a letter by Ken Crossen leading off the letter-section, wherein he goes a little deeper into the matter of auctorial responsibility, but there's one side-issue I'd like to boot around a bit. That is the matter of "what I meant when I said..." and the complaint about "anti eggheads" destroying our language. It's true, of course, that precise meanings tend to get blurred as words and phrases are used more and more—comprehension decreasing as the use increases—just as new coins eventually become worn with use, so that the original inscriptions get unrecognizable in time.

Complaints about the purity of lan-

guage, sloppy and blurred usages, etc., are quite common in history; I think you'll find 'em in the general critical writings and speeches of almost every great civilization, where records exist. And with the complaints you're likely to see suggestions for improved speech-education and habits, more comprehensive use of the dictionary—or whatever passes for same in the specific culture—and so on.

Unfortunately, there are at least two important misconceptions buried beneath this type of complaint. One is that once a word or phrase is given a "meaning" or "set of meanings" the issue is settled—or ought to be set-

[Turn To Page 8]



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tled—once and for all. The other misconception is that if everyone would only use the “right words” we’d all understand each other.

First of all, how are dictionaries made up? Well, to put it briefly, research teams go over each word already in dictionaries and re-examine them to discover if (a) the word is still in current use—as it appeared last time, or at all; (b) *how* the word has been chiefly employed in the past and present, covering its usages in literature, science, art, politics, advertising, medicine, entertainment, etc., as well as local and colloquial uses that have “caught on”. As many different uses as possible are collected, then an effort is made to assess the currency of each type of usage. (Along with this, variations in spelling and pronunciation are explored.) The final listing in each new edition represents the editors’ decisions as to the *most common* employments of each word or phrase.

Correctness as such is not a consideration. Irrespective of what the word was supposed to mean in any golden age or high-point of superbly-correct usage, the dictionary’s function is to list *current* meanings—current at the time of its publication of course—so that people who use the dictionary can find what a usage unfamiliar to them means, *generally*.

Take the word “angry” which is a point of discussion in Crossen’s thesis. The American College Dictionary, Random House 1948, gives the following:

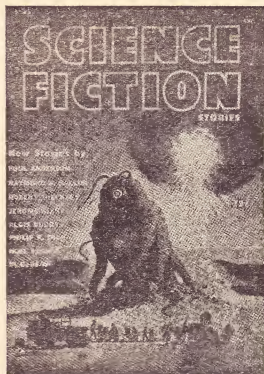
Angry: 1. Feeling or showing anger or resentment (*with* or *at* a person, *at* or *about* a thing). 2. Characterized by anger; wrathful: *angry words*. 3. *Med.* inflamed, as a sore; exhibiting inflammation.

Offhand, I can’t think of any other meanings or usages of the term not stated or implied above. However, and here we come to the second point: even when the dictionary meaning is used, and “angry” is the “right word”

there is likely to be doubt as to the *precise meaning* within the given context. Theoretically, the context of a word should indicate the shade of meaning intended, and often it does. (That is, it does for a particular reader or listener—but not necessarily for another reader or listener.) Often, what the speaker or writer “really meant” may not be apparent to anyone else, partly because the speaker or writer “knew he was using the right word”, and what are dictionaries for, eh? Look it up, and you’ll see what I meant.

Frankly, I sympathize with everyone who complains about the blurring of meanings that goes on all the time—accelerated to frightening degrees in times of world-wide or nation-wide unrest. And I sympathize with those who would like to restore words to their (possibly) “earlier and more precise” meanings—even feel a sneaking sympathy toward the “one word, one meaning” boys at times. However, my sense of “reality” doesn’t let this sympathy get in my way; if you want to get your point across to another person, you have to make compromises; you have to find out—as nearly as you can—what the words in question mean *to him*, and to use such words and phrases *as he would himself*. Not always, of course; but realization of the necessity of talking to others in their own usages, and the ability to do so when necessary, can often make the difference between a hit and a strike-out when you want very badly to convince someone else of something—even if that convincing is only getting him to understand what you’re trying to say.

The language and language-habits of almost any time might be considered “corrupt” if related to an earlier time. We consider Shakespeare’s language, and the language of the King James translation of the Bible, as more or less “classic” English; but I won’t
[Turn To Page 81]



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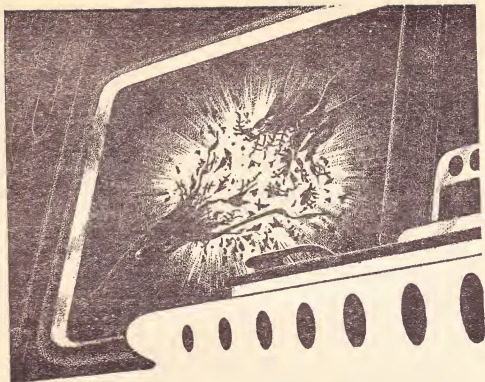
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Was this the Enemy's subtle trap, or was this woman what she claimed to be — an Earthling frozen in suspended animation for three thousand years?

THE WAYWARD COURSE

Novelet of Worlds To Come by Randall Garrett

(illustrated by Frank Kelly Freas)

THE PRIME officer of the Galactic Interstellar Ship *Pendar* looked carefully at the detector-globe and frowned. "All right," he said, "I give up. What is it?"

The External Security Officer al-

ready wore a frown. "It's hard to say, sir. According to the detector, the thing is moving at three-quarters light velocity and has a mass at rest of around twelve thousand tons. Which doesn't make sense."

"Agreed," the Prime said sourly. "If it's a natural body, its velocity in this sector of the Galaxy shouldn't exceed forty miles per second with reference to the Center. If it's a ship, its velocity should be on the order of ten kilolights if it expects to get anywhere in the next couple of centuries."

The ESO, ever in agreement with his superior, nodded, too. "Right. The reason I asked your advice is that the Chief Calculator doesn't give an answer I can act on."

"Give me the CC," the Prime said.

The ESO flipped on the communicator that led to the great robot brain buried in the depths of the ship.

"Calculations reporting," said the speaker.

"What are your findings on this object?" asked the Prime, indicating the detector globe.

"I can only offer two solutions, sir. It is either a ruse of the Great Enemy or it is an obsolete spaceship of our own."

The ESO looked at the Prime as if to say: *See? Nonsense!* But the Prime didn't agree. A CC didn't give nonsense answers; its answers were in accord with its data. He asked: "What is our best approach?"

"Hard to say," answered the CC candidly. "If it's an Enemy ship, we should try to get more data; if it's an obsolete ship, we can just go up and capture it."

The Prime's frown grew deeper. "But see here—if it's an Enemy, it's at our mercy; we can blast it out of space. On the other hand, even an obsolete craft would be going faster than that if its engines are in working order. If they're not, it couldn't move any faster than—say a thousand miles per second."

"You mistake my meaning, sir. By 'obsolete,' I mean that the ship is conceivably three thousand years old. And since this is actually more probable than the other assumption, our

best and most favorable action would be a spiral approach. I'll give you the figures if you want them."

The Prime only hesitated a moment. "Very well. If it's an Enemy ship, it would be better for us to die than to let a trick of any kind pass us by."

"Very well, sir." The CC began feeding its calculations into the control mechanisms of the ship.

No ship traveling at less than light velocity can detect a ship traveling at ultralight velocities. The *GIS Pendar* approached the oddly-moving body without the slightest resistance.

It was an artificially-constructed body, all right—a long, cigar-shaped thing. It took a lot of maneuvering on the part of the *Pendar* to match the strange ship's velocity, because the *Pendar* wasn't built for such intermediate speeds.

When they were finally floating in space alongside the hulk, the Prime Officer sent a full-armed party of Space Marines aboard. They found a tomb.

"It's an old ship, all right," said the External Security Officer, who had led the party. "Take a look at this." He held out a photostat of a plaque they had found inside the craft.

The Prime looked at it and then looked at the ESO. "What does it mean?"

"According to the Chief Calculator, it says THIRD INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITION. It's written in ancient Earth English."

"English!" The Prime looked baffled. "Why the thing *must* be at least three thousand years old!"

"Older, maybe. And there are eight hundred bodies aboard, all frozen solid!"

IT WAS THE labs on Kelivar IV that got the ship. There was a lot of wrangling at first, but when the Government declared it a non-mili-

tary project, all the first three classes of research-teams were automatically dropped from consideration.

Kelivar IV held the best anthropological lab in the Galaxy. It was situated on the planet's equatorial land-mass, near the Kespín Sea; it was the best, but it had to be satisfied with fourth-class equipment. Anthropology didn't rate very high in the military estimate of sciences necessary for the War Effort.

Dr. Layson Gell was waiting for the ancient ship when it was brought into an orbit around Kelivar IV. When the communicator notified him that it had arrived, he signalled for a flitter to take him up to it, and then turned to Captain Linstet, the military officer assigned to the lab. "She's up there. Want to go with me?"

Linstet nodded. "Definitely, although I don't see any purpose in your going by yourself."

"Preliminary survey," Gell said. Then he grinned. "Besides, I'm not going by myself; you're coming."

Linstet grinned sourly. "What significance, if any, do you attach to the appearance of this ship at this time?"

Gell shook his head. "None—at least not so far. It will take a thorough investigation of the ship to decide whether anything subtle is being pulled on us."

"Isn't it better to assume—"

"No, dammit, it isn't better to assume anything," Gell said sharply. "This may be an Enemy device, and it may not; they may know what we're going to do about it, and they may not. But the probability-readings are too much to ignore. Look at it this way: If that's an Enemy device, we can destroy it before it can do any widespread harm—that is, assuming it's a physical threat.

"If it's a psychological threat of immediate nature, we can get rid of it in the same way. On the other hand, if it's a psychological time-fuse, set

to do us the maximum amount of harm at some unknown time in the future, there's nothing we can do about it."

The captain looked at him sharply. "What do you mean?"

Gell shrugged. "I mean that if we can't figure it out between now and the time it's supposed to act, our Psychological Warfare Department—and our science of psychology—is so far behind theirs that we'd lose anyway."

Linstet's expression showed he didn't like that philosophy of warfare, but he had no argument to counter Gell's reasoning.

The flitter's call-signal notified the two men that it had landed on the roof. They left Gell's office and took the lifter to the top without saying another word to each other.

DR. GELL guided the flitter skillfully through the planet's shimmering ionosphere, and on into the relatively-empty vacuum above.

The ancient ship was floating in a nearly-circular orbit that held it stationary above a single spot on the surface of Kelivar IV, since the time required for the ship to make one revolution in its orbit was exactly equal to the time required for the planet to make one rotation on its axis.

Gell matched velocities and looked out the plate at the hulk. He knew that the faint, glittering sparks in the distance were the two cruisers assigned to guard the relic, but he paid them little attention; the signals from his own flitter had identified him automatically.

The old ship, up close, didn't look so bad after all. The surface had been roughed up quite a bit by the particles of interstellar dust that had hit her at point-seven-five light-year velocity during her long voyage; but they had been of atomic size and had hit her evenly without gouging holes. The surface was simply a dead gray in color.

Gell wondered fleetingly how thick the outer hull had been to begin with. The military escort had reported that the ship was at least three thousand years old, but Gell suspected that was an underestimate.

Carefully, he moved the little flitter toward the airlock of the ancient vessel. "All right, Linstet, let's go."

He put on his own suit while the captain dressed, and the two of them walked into the silent hulk.

Gell noticed that the fingers of Linstet's right hand were contracting spasmodically near his hip. The captain was used to boarding dead hulks with the idea that there might—just accidentally might—be a living member of the Enemy aboard. There never had been; no prisoners had ever been captured in the long history of the war—but that didn't keep the captain from being jumpy.

Gell was grinning when he suddenly realized that his own right hand was clenched tightly into a fist, and he knew that he was wishing for a gun himself.

"Was there any air in this thing when they found it?" Linstet asked. His voice was calm in spite of the tension.

Gell shook his head. "No, not according to the *Pendar's* report. Whether it leaked out gradually over the years, or was released accidentally, is something we'd like to know."

The long, metallic corridors, lit only by the moving spots from the two men's light-beams, brought a phrase to Gell's mind: "hollow echoes". That's what they should have heard, had there been an atmosphere to carry echoes.

There was nothing living aboard the ship; the biometers had shown that. But, according to the report of the CC, there were eight hundred potentially-living things aboard. Gell and Linstet headed toward the compartment where these things were.

It wasn't large. The white, marble-

like blocks which encased the bodies were in rows in a compartment about forty feet wide, by thirty feet high, by eighty feet long. Not much space for eight hundred people.

The room was cold, naturally, as a room exposed to the near-absolute zero of interstellar space would be. But Gell noticed that each block was surrounded by tiny coils.

Refrigeration, in case of accidental temperature rise, he thought.

Linstet ran a gloved hand over one of the incredibly-cold blocks. "You can't see anything but the white stuff. How do you know they're inside there?"

"Protein analysis with subetherics. At least I assume so; I'll have a check run, of course, but I imagine the CC of the *Pendar* was pretty thorough on that point." He paused a moment, looking up and down the rows of silent white blocks. "I wonder where they were headed—and why?" he asked softly.

Linstet shrugged. "What I'd like to know is why they're still here. Why didn't they land?"

"Let's look around," Gell answered.

It was a good three hours before they finally discovered what had run the ancient ship off its course. Some bit of cosmic dust had hit the belly of the ship a glancing blow. It couldn't have been very big, not at the rate the ship was moving, for its entrance was marked by a sharply-outlined hole the size of a man's thumb. But the damage it had done was all out of proportion to its size. The little bit of debris, and the metal of the hull it had punched out, had vaporized within the ship; at that temperature, it had wrecked one whole section of the vessel.

It was impossible to tell, from the remains, what mechanisms had been housed there; but it was obvious that the slight impact of the little mote of dust had been the cause of the ship's wayward course.

A fraction of an inch off-course seems small, but at interstellar distances it can mean that a ship passes its destination billions of miles away.

After a thorough examination, Gell and Linstet headed back toward the airlock. "Is that all you wanted to look at?" Linstet asked cautiously.

Gell glanced at him. "I can't tell much on a preliminary survey; I just came up here to see what questions we should ask this hulk."

"Did you get the same questions I did?"

Gell turned and looked at the interior of the ship. "I think so. Didn't you think there was something odd about the instruments and things aboard?"

Linstet nodded. "I didn't recognize a damned one of them!"

2



ELL LOOKED around the table, and thought, *Only seven of us.*

It wasn't much of an investigating crew; not nearly what he needed. The Military had called off three of his best men in the past fifty days, channeling their efforts to "more productive work". Meaning, of course, armaments.

Luckily, the men remaining were good men. If the Military chose men by their intelligence or experience, it would have been a different story. But they wanted technicians and psychologists; they had no use for archeologists.

He wished they'd call Linstet off; it seemed a waste of military power to keep him here. It wasn't that Gell didn't like the man; Linstet was a nice guy and didn't try to throw his weight around. But Gell didn't see

why they'd left him and taken Crossell, for example. Crossell was no genius, but he was a hell of a good technician.

One of the men at the table, Kreyman, spoke: "Dr. Gell, if you're ready, I have the preliminary report."

Kreyman will be the next to go, Cell thought. *He knows too much psychology.* He switched on the recorder and nodded. "Go ahead, Dr. Kreyman."

Kreyman, a smallish man with the bright golden hair typical of the Mel-don planets, began to read off the report in a low voice. "The Military engineers, after a thorough examination of the equipment aboard the ship, have agreed with us that it is necessary to determine the approximate era to which the ship belongs.

"Radiocarbon analysis of the organic components aboard the vessel help to bracket its age, but not with the usual accuracy because of the long exposure of the ship to cosmic radiation. However, within the limits of error, the date is assumed to be between three thousand eight hundred and four thousand two hundred years ago. This is within plus or minus five percent.

"Anthropologically, however, we can narrow that down a bit."

He looked at Gell, who nodded approval, and continued, "Our knowledge of the beginning of the human race goes back only as far as Earth, the original planet from which man sprang. Sol III, however, was the first victim of the Great Enemy; it was rendered unfit for human life at some time between four and five thousand years ago. Co-ordinating the two data, we can see that the first attack and the launching of this ship can be pinpointed within two centuries.

"Within the ship are eight hundred human beings in a state of suspended animation, frozen in blocks of ethylene glycol, and kept below sixty degrees absolute. Unfortunately, the

mechanism for thawing them was either destroyed by the collision with the dust-mote or is out of order and unrecognizable. It is suggested, therefore, that this group select one of the passengers at random and attempt to revive him.

"If the attempt is successful, we believe that vital information for the War Effort will be obtained." Kreyman paused again, and looked up. "The report is signed by every member of the group.

Gell said, "For the record, Dr. Kreyman, have we any way of knowing whether the passengers are still alive?"

Kreyman shook his head. "None. It all depends on whether they were frozen quickly enough, and whether they have suffered any danger during the trip. The only way we can find out is to thaw them out."

"I see." Gell paused a moment for effect. He wanted the record to sound impressive to the Military.

Then: "Very well, Dr. Kreyman; we will select our subject."

IN ORDER to be absolutely impartial, the block was chosen by subjecting the whole lot to probability-analysis. They had to select the one person who was, at the same time, most likely to be alive and least likely to be of any importance in the ship's crew. They didn't want to experiment on vital personnel.

It was a woman. Her number was 224 according to the plaque on the plastic-encased block, but who she was they did not know. The hard vacuum of space had long since reduced the ship's log to dust through dehydration.

Gell ordered the opaque white block to be transported to the cold labs on the planet's nearest moon. The first job was to get the frozen ethylene glycol off her. They couldn't figure any way to reduce the

whole mass to a liquid at three forty-eight point five degrees absolute without drowning the girl. They had to chop off all the excess without thawing the human being inside, and they had to do it without chipping any flesh off. It was going to be a damned delicate proposition.

"We'll use the surgical midgets," Gell decided; "we can get better control that way."

Dr. Kreyman grinned. "I always knew you were a chiseler. Now we'll have proof of it."

Gell lifted an imperious eyebrow. "I'll have you know, sir, that I am that peculiar paradox of virtue, a *good* chiseler."

"Oh, sure, but you're a bad influence."

"How so?"

"You're going to make chiselers out of the rest of us."

Gell winced. "I surrender; let's get started before the Military changes our minds for us."

In the control-room of the cold lab, Gell assigned the positions. "I'll take One; Kreyman will take Two; Gross, take Three; Helmer, Five; Rums, Six; and Thorbin, you take Seven. I wish we could have the other three positions filled, but we haven't the men. Let's go."

Each of the men fitted himself into the intricate controls of the work-robots. Hands and arms went into gloves; legs and feet went into boots; the torso was fitted with special close-fitting garments. And, last of all, they donned the helmets.

When the men were finally completely encased in the controls, Gell gave the signal that switched the work-robots into life. From that minute on, every movement that each man made would be relayed to the supralloy nerves of the midget under his control, and each bit of sensory information received by the robot would be returned to the man at its controls. The all-important helmet fed and re-

layed sight, sound, and tactile sensations back and forth—as though the wearer were actually experiencing the same thing the midget did.

So closely co-ordinated were the two, that the operator got the eerie feeling that he actually was the robot; the feeling was especially weird because the robots were only a foot high.

They were delicate in appearance only; the tiny fingers, arms, and legs, although only a sixth the size of a normal adult's, could exert, through their supralloy muscles, a force nearly twice that of human muscles. And yet, the microfine nervous-system had all the delicacy of control of a surgeon's. And that was as it should be, for the robots were primarily used for surgical work. An eye-operation is much easier if the eye seems to be seven inches across to the surgeon.

Gell adjusted himself to the robot to get the feel of it, and then—

He strode across the scaffolding which had been erected around the white block that now loomed hugely in his eyes because of his reduced viewpoint.

The other six simalcra, identifiable only by the small number on the front and the big number on the back, followed him to the scaffold. They stopped at the foot of the great block.

"There she is," he said, "forty feet of statue to chisel out of her tomb."

Number Two's voice came. "I get to clean out her naval."

But Kreyman's light-heartedness didn't carry conviction.

IT TOOK time. With jack-hammer and chisel, the seven tiny robots chipped and hacked at the ethylene glycol ice that surrounded the girl. The outer layers came off easily, but the closer they got to the hard, frozen tissues of the girl's body, the more careful they had to be. One slip of a hammer, one misstep with a chisel, and they could break a piece of flesh from her white, marble-hard body. And the

hole that was left would be a bleeding wound when the body thawed.

It took thirty hours of delicate work before the woman was completely free of the frozen preservative that surrounded her.

"All right," said Gell at last, "now comes the hard part."

The work thus-far had been physically tiring, but from now on it would be nerves that were going to be overworked. Could the girl be thawed properly? And, if so, would she live? And if she didn't? They didn't like to think about that. If she didn't live, it might be because the freezing-process four thousand years before had been at fault. Or something during the intervening period might have upset the immobilized body processes enough to cause death.

But there was always the possibility that the men who had brought her out of her frozen state had erred.

There was one other thing. If she lived, would she be sane? Brain-tissue is easily damaged and impossible to heal; her whole nervous-system might be irreparably damaged by some small thing that muscles, blood, and connective tissue could take in their stride.

Still, it had to be done. Looking at it callously, they had eight hundred bodies to experiment with. If one went wrong, they had more; they could kill seven and still be within less than one percent error. But even Linstet didn't like the statistics of "one percent error". As a military man, he could calmly face the possible death of eighty percent of a fleet attacking the Great Enemy, but this was, as he put it, "like cutting a man's throat while he's asleep in his own home".

They used the man-sized robots this time. Very carefully, they laid the girl's white, hard, frozen body inside the coils of an induction-heater. Again the situation was ticklish. They couldn't, obviously, put her in a warm room to do the thawing. If they did, the surface-layers of her flesh might

warm up too much before they got her ready for the induction-heating.

On the other hand, they couldn't thaw her in a room with a temperature of some sixty degrees absolute; one breath, and she'd die. The helium atmosphere wasn't poisonous, but it was deadly cold.

THEY FINALLY settled on a small, insulated case which would be flooded with warm oxygen a half-second before the inductors went on.

"I don't understand," Captain Linstet said puzzledly. "She won't thaw below two seventy six absolute, and she could stand that after you warmed her."

His voice came from the robot standing next to Gell as the girl was being encased in the special cell. Gell started to reply, but Dr. Kreyman took the explanation on himself. "It's a matter of ice-formation in the cells. There is more than one kind of frozen water, you see. The formula for water is generally given as H_2O , but that's not accurate. Even liquid water has a formula something like $H_{12}O_6$. The crystalline structures of ices vary according to the temperatures and pressures to which they are subjected.

"If allowed to freeze normally, the cells of a human body are ruptured by the expansion of the ice as it freezes. But the type of ice in these tissues isn't crystalline; it's a glass. In other words, the water in her body isn't frozen, in the normal sense of the word; it's a supercooled liquid.

"If she's still alive, her body hasn't really been frozen; it's simply been slowed down. But if we were to warm her above sixty absolute, that supercooled liquid would freeze into a crystalline solid and kill her instantly. So what we have to do is get her body up to normal so fast that the water hasn't time to go through the freezing stage. See?"

The captain nodded.

By this time, the girl's body was

ready. The capsule was sealed, and the necessary equipment was taped to her—heart exciter, adrenelin-injector, and so on; all the apparatus that would be needed to change the cold, white thing in the capsule to a living, breathing woman.

"Ready?" asked Gell.

"Ready," came the ragged chorus.

"Let her go," Gell said softly.

The induction-coils flashed briefly, but even before they had ceased to glow, the stiff, marble-like thing before them had softened into human flesh. The heart-exciter took over.

Gell watched the instruments tensely.

Ka-pum — ka-pum — ka-pum — ka-pum —

The heart was beating, but not of its own accord. It was only a throb induced by the regular pulses of the exciter.

Ka-pum — ka-pum — ka-pum —

Gell pushed a switch, and the adrenelin-hypo shot its heavy dosage into the inert girl.

Ka-pum — ka-pum — KA-KA-PUM — KA-KA-PUM —

"Double beat! Cut the exciter!"

Ka-pum — ka-pum — ka-pum —

The heart was beating by itself!

"She's alive," Captain Linstet said softly. "Four thousand years old, and she's alive!"

3



HE DIDN'T become conscious for three hours. By that time, they had transferred her to the station hospital on Kelivar IV.

When she did awaken, her method of doing so was not quite normal. One minute she was quite unconscious—then, quite suddenly, her eyes were open and she was looking at them. She

smiled; her lips moved and she spoke.

Gell smiled back. "We can't understand you, I'm afraid. We can read and write ancient English, but we don't know how it was spoken."

The girl frowned slightly and sat up in bed. She looked carefully at the seven members of the research team and at Captain Linstet in his dull, metal-gray uniform. Then she smiled again, nodding. Again her speech was unintelligible.

Kreyman, the only one of the seven who could call himself fluent in writing English, had an electrowriter ready. He looked at Gell.

"Ask her what her name is," Gell said.

Kreyman wrote, and the girl looked at the panel. She nodded and stretched out her hands. Kreyman relinquished the keys. "My name is Ledora Mayne," she wrote.

They told her—in part—who they were, and for a good half hour, they exchanged information of the commonplace type.

Gell noticed that she watched his lips when he spoke, and he began to feel that she wasn't really answering his questions.

Then, suddenly, she grinned. "I see that a slight change in vowel-values and syllabic-stress has taken place, but the structure of the language has remained essentially the same.

"Now I would like some information: how long have I been under?"

There was a long silence. The girl's speaking had been entirely unexpected. The Gell said: "We had thought that the period was about four thousand years, but it seems we were mistaken."

Her smile was still there. "You mean because I'm speaking your language? I see." Her voice dropped a little, and her face clouded. "Then the attack was successful. You people are descendants of the Sirius or Alpha Centauri expeditions." Then her eyes glowed with great joy. "And you have discovered the great secret of the interstellar drive!"

Shocked, Linstet stood up. "Who are you?" he asked in a savage voice. "If you think you can fool us with that line of hogwash, you're completely mistaken!"

The girl looked directly at him, then, and all the internal brilliance of her personality seemed to radiate from her like the light from a sun. And, like that light, the energy that showed on the surface was obviously only a fraction of what seethed beneath. "My dear sir," she said, her voice soft and vibrant, "I have no intention of feeding you hogwash. I see that your are quite unable to grasp the meaning of what I have said. Therefore, I will have to explain.

"I think, however, that it could be better, psychologically, to wait until you have had time to assimilate it yourself."

Then she turned to look at Gell. "I wonder if I could get something to eat. I assure you that I have no intention of saying anything until I have been fed."

Gell looked at her for a long second, and then nodded. "I can see you mean it. Very well; we will see that you are fed. We will come back in an hour."

LINSTET stood in the center of the room and glared at the scientists assembled around Gell's desk. "Let me question her," he said angrily. "I'll find out what sort of trickery she's up to!"

Gell patted the air with a hand. "Simmer down, Captain. We can't attack the problem that way; you're sore because she insulted you."

"What do *you* propose to do, then?" Linstet's voice was heavy with suppressed emotion.

"I propose," Gell said evenly, "that we use the scientific method. We get facts, compose a hypothesis, test the hypothesis, and modify it in the light of new facts received—"

"That's all very well," Linstet's voice cut in acidly, "but we don't have

any facts; I want to get them from her. If this is an 'Enemy psychological device, as I suspect it to be, we have to have facts."

"But we *do* have facts." Gell emphasized the point by tapping his forefinger on the desk top. "Consider: we have here a woman who, according to our best tests, is a human being who has been frozen in a state of suspended animation for four thousand years. Upon awakening, she is able to speak modern Galactic after listening to us talk for a little while and comparing our spoken words with what is written in ancient English."

Linstet nodded. "Which shows it's a trick; nobody could learn that fast."

"I'll agree that it *could* be a trick. But if it is, it's either very crude or very subtle. Remember what she said? 'I see that you are quite unable to grasp the meaning of what I said.' You took it as an insult, but she didn't say it that way; she merely stated a fact."

"Let's take another tack. You noticed the girl's personality, I'm sure. It's so alive it's breathtaking; as a matter of fact, she frightened you a little."

One of the other men spoke up. "She frightened *me* a little, too, Dr. Gell."

Gell nodded in agreement. "Now suppose she had an intelligence to match that personality—which is, of course, a logical necessity."

The others were silent for a moment, then Kreyman said: "In that case, I see no reason why she could not have deduced the pronunciation of our language with the few clues given her—especially since she already knew the basic language."

"Exactly," said Gell. "And the reasoning which we have so laboriously gone through would have flashed through her mind—or any other mind with her IQ immediately."

Captain Linstet frowned. "You mean to her we're just a bunch of idiots?"

Kreyman answered the question.

"Not precisely; intelligence can't be compared that way. An animal, for instance, cannot ever know that a human being is more intelligent; the concept never occurs to an animal. A human idiot realizes dimly that normal people can 'think better' than he can. But only dimly."

"But a normal human being has reached the stage of intelligence which enables him to define, at least in part, what intelligence is. That girl's thinking-processes are faster than ours, and she requires less data to compute with, but her answers are not necessarily any better than ours."

"You said, 'not necessarily,'" Linstet pointed out. "Don't you think it's possible that they could be?"

"Possible? Yes, definitely," agreed Kreyman. "But we don't dare act on that basis, or we're licked from the start. If we don't assume that our thinking is just as reliable as hers—even though it's more ponderous—we won't be able to use the answers we do get."

"But she can think faster, and—"

"A robot can think faster, too," Kreyman pointed out; "but it gets the same answer a human would get when the human is given enough time."

"All right," Linstet sighed heavily, "I don't like it, but I'll go along with you; what's our next step?"

"We have formed a theory," said Dr. Gell. "The next step is to get more facts."

ONE OF THE nurses had given Ledora Mayne some clothing, and she was sitting in a chair sipping hot spice-brew from a cup when Kreyman and Gell entered.

Linstet and the others had agreed to stay in the control-office and watch the scene through the visors. "And remember," Gell had warned, "she'll probably figure she's being watched, so don't be surprised at anything she says—or doesn't say. We don't know how many jumps ahead of us she is."

Ledora Mayne looked up at the them and smiled. "You know?"

The two men seated themselves. Gell said: "We think we know, but we'd like to hear your explanation."

"Certainly. I presume there is a great deal of Earth's history that you don't know?"

She gave it the inflection of a question, but it was obviously a statement of fact.

She's trying not to make us feel inferior, Gell thought. Aloud, he said: "Very little. Our ancestors, as you said, left Earth about five thousand years ago. We have, you will notice, preserved the Earth year as a standard.

"The first colony, on Sirius V, did not know, of course, of the existence of the second colony on Altair III; and it was about a thousand years later that the Altairians had progressed far enough to build a sub-light drive that would take them to Sirius. The Sirians had worked on the problem along a different line, and within a short time the first ultralight ship was built. At about that time, the planets of both suns were attacked by the Great Enemy; but we managed to stop the attack before any great damage was done.

"Since then, we have expanded over a quarter of the Galaxy. We found Earth, but it was a radioactive ruin." He paused, looking steadily at the girl. "Suppose you take it from there."

"Very well," she said in her vibrant voice. "The first two expeditions were one-way shots, as you know. Their velocity was about a quarter that of light, and the high-velocity energy-transfer method of quick-freezing was unknown then; so it was the second generation of colonists that landed.

"Now the Khethani have—"

"The who?" asked Kreyman sharply.

"You call them the Great Enemy; they call themselves the Khethani."

"You've met them?" his voice was incredulous. "What—"

"Let me finish, please; you can ask questions then. The Khethani have a method of detecting large material bodies, moving at velocities greater than twenty thousand miles per second.

"**WE** DIDN'T realize they were looking for us until they had actually landed on Earth. It seems that the lower the velocity, the more difficult it is to pinpoint the position of the body in space. They combed that area of the Galaxy of the body in space. They combed that area of the Galaxy for years before they found Earth; but by then, both of the original colonial ships had arrived at their destinations.

"The Khethani are supreme egoists. The very thought of another race attempting to colonize the Galaxy was supremely abhorrent to them; so they took over Earth.

"However, they made one mistake. Before they attacked, they broadcast an ultimatum. 'Tell us where your colonists went—or else'." She shrugged a little. "It was foolish of them; human beings are egoists, too. All information leading to Sirius and Altair was destroyed. The few people who knew the secret destinations of the ships submitted to partial amnesia treatment. By the time the Khethans had conquered us, the knowledge of the colonists' whereabouts had been effectively covered."

"Just a moment," interrupted Gell. "Altair and Sirius are only a few light-years from Earth. Why didn't they search?"

The girl looked at him. "They did not know either the exact velocity or direction of the ships. They knew only that the colonists were within a fifty light-year radius of Sol. That's a big volume of space to cover; it contains a good many planets. Add, too, the fact that it takes time and men to search

an Earth-type planet for a few hundred people."

"But they *could* have done it; why didn't they?"

"I'm coming to that. The first thing they did—before they struck Earth—was to put up a subetheric interference-screen around the Solar system. They didn't know that the subradio had been discovered after the colonists left, and they hoped that the new colonies would eventually put in a call to Earth.

"Therefore, they clamped tight controls on Earth. They took away all of our atomic plants, our spaceports, everything. They absolutely forbade any technological experimentation anywhere; our books were burned, our colleges and universities destroyed, and our government scattered.

"Then the Khathani sat down to wait.

"There was only one thing that saved us—or, rather, one man. Edouard Sessen, Earth's finest psychologist. He had perfected what is now known as the Sessen system of mind-control, which allows human beings to use the full potentialities of their brains.

"It was kept secret, of course, from the invaders, and through it, we kept our technology. In my own memory alone, I have a catalogue of over thirty thousand books.

"Even with that, it was a race against time. We built a fleet of a thousand ships—secretly. Each was to hold eight hundred people. But at about the same time, the Khethani began to realize that the colonists would never contact Earth; they decided to destroy us."

THE GIRL paused to take a sip from her cup, then she continued quietly. "We had perfected a device which would blanket the Khethani velocity-detectors, so that our ships couldn't be found, even if they were

moving at seventy-five percent light-velocity.

"We didn't know the direction of the Khethan planets from Earth, so the destination of each ship was different. We picked distant stars, all over twenty-five hundred light-years from Sol. We took off just a few hours before the intended attack on Earth."

She stopped, still smiling, and Gell realized with a slight shock that her story was finished.

He broke the silence. "After the destruction of Earth, they still had a thousand years to find the colonies. Why is it they didn't?"

"I can only guess, but I should say it was because they discovered that our fleet had taken off. This would indicate, to their peculiar minds, that they had underestimated our intelligence and that we could outwit them. They knew that if we could hide a thousand-ship fleet on Earth, our colonists could certainly hide out in the stars."

"Then why were we attacked as soon as we used a sublight drive?"

She looked thoughtful. "Again, this is only a guess, but I'll give you my analysis for what it is' worth.

"First, if they knew we had a detector-blanket, they would assume our superiority. Then, when the first Aitarian ship took off at sublight velocity, without the detector-blanket, they sent a small task-force, assuming it might be a trap. When the Sirian ultralight ships took off to fight back, they were *sure* it was a trap.

"Thus convinced of the superiority of the human race, they have contented themselves with expansion only in their own sector of the Galaxy. They are egoists, yes, but they are also realists."

"But that's ridiculous!" exploded Kreymen. "We have been fighting them to a stalemate over a fifty-thousand light-year front for over three thousand years! We've fought tooth and nail to hold them to a standstill!"

Her smile changed then, and it was

the soft smile that one would smile at a child. "I'm afraid they don't look at it that way. They are merely protecting themselves, and they assume you are doing the same. They assume that humans are realists, too; they would look on that front as a sort of mutually agreed-upon border. They patrol their side, you patrol yours.

"What you consider to be a 'tooth and nail' struggle for existence is assumed to be merely border skirmishes by the Khethani. If they knew you were fighting with everything you've got, they would have invaded long ago."

4



HE SILENCE was thick and tense in the room. Kreyman started to say something, but Gell spoke first. "I see. I would like to talk this over with my staff, if you don't mind. If you would excuse us—"

They left the room without another word. Neither spoke until they reached the control-office where the others were waiting. "Well," said Gell then, "what did you think of that?"

Captain Linstet was the first to speak. He was smiling, but there was a trace of bitterness in it. "I told you from the beginning that it was an Enemy trick. Do they think we're fools to fall for that sort of trick? Obviously, that story is meant to demoralize us; if that girl's story were to be believed, human resistance against the Great Enemy would collapse."

Gell nodded slowly. "True. I'm sure we all felt the shock when she said it."

"Do you believe it?" Linstet asked, narrowing his eyes.

Gell stared into space for a long time, then he turned slowly to face Linstet again. "I don't know," he said

softly. "I realize there's very little evidence to back up her story. But the way she *says* it! Not the words, but the personality underneath! You've got to admit she's very convincing."

"Not to me, she isn't," Linstet said, his voice hard. "I'll admit she frightens me—but it's the same fright I feel when I see an Enemy ship. It makes me want to fight. What do you intend to do next, Dr. Gell?"

Before Gell could answer, Kreyman said: "There's a way her story could be proved."

They all looked at him expectantly.

"She made a statement," Kreyman went on, "about something which she called the Sessen system of mind-control. She said that it was the system which gave her her present mental equipment. We can assume that any normal human being could learn it; all we have to do to prove her story is to ask her to teach us the method."

"Why, yes," Gell said excitedly, "we can—"

"No!" Captain Linstet's voice crackled across the room. "Can't you fools see that that's part of the trap? You all know that under hypnosis the mind possesses abnormal powers. That girl has been hypnotized by the Enemy! If you get her to teach you this mind control system of hers, you'll be in the same fix she is in! I say *no!*"

"We can test that," said Kreyman. "We can find out whether she's hypnotized or not, and we can test her intelligence. In order for her to be as intelligent as she seems, she would have to run every one of our tests perfectly."

"Very well," agreed Gell. "Prepare your tests; we'll see if we can find something that way."

Captain Linstet sighed. "I'm sorry to have to do this, gentlemen; I never thought I'd have to. But a psychological trap is like a disease; it can spread. From now on, no one sees that girl, no one talks to her.

"As of this moment, this station and

everyone in it are under Military Law!"

There was an excited garble of voices from the seven scientists, then Dr. Gell's voice cut through. "Just a minute! The captain is perfectly within his rights! But—" He turned toward Linstet. "—may I ask why?"

"Logic," said Linstet tightly. "We don't know what kind of damage that girl can do, but we do know one thing: if she had never been discovered, we would be no worse off than before. I am going to see to it that the ship is destroyed, the girl killed, and all knowledge of what she said wiped from our minds."

GELL AND Kreyman looked at each other across the table in the station cafeteria. Gell said: "Linstet says he has requested that the ship be loaded with explosives and blown up. He wants to make sure of its total destruction."

"He'll do it, too," Kreyman said sarcastically; "he's a manly little fellow."

Gell rubbed a hand across his tired eyes. "Don't blame him. It's the way his mind is built to function: don't take a chance unless you have to. At least he hasn't ordered the Space Marines in to enforce his orders; we're on our honor."

"Sure, sure," nodded Kreyman. "And the battle cruiser *Rayvon* is floating up in the stratosphere, ready to bomb the whole station out of existence if he gives the word."

"I know; I know. If only we could save the girl."

"How? He's got that whole hallway guarded, and he has a man on a spy-screen twenty-four hours a day. He won't even let anyone in there to feed her. I think he's even afraid to send someone in to kill her."

"I think he—shh! Here he comes!"

Captain Linstet strode across the room toward the two men, ignoring the glares he was getting from the crowd at the tables. "Dr. Gell," he said crisp-

ly, "I wonder if you'd come up to my office for a few minutes? I have a report to make out, and I'd like to get your personal opinion on this matter."

"Certainly," Gell said stiffly. He rose and followed Linstet out of the cafeteria. They took an elevator to the upper floor where the Military Office was located.

"Just a minute," Linstet said, stopping at the door of one of the rooms, "I want to see what the girl is doing."

Inside, a young officer was idly watching the screen.

"What's she doing?" Linstet asked, crossing the room.

"Nothing much, sir; she's been staring out the window for the past hour."

Linstet took one look at the screen, then turned savagely on the younger man. "Lieutenant! Have you gone mad? Where is the girl?"

As Gell walked toward them, he could see the young officer's face turn white. "Why, she's right there, sir!" He pointed a finger at the screen. "Sitting right there by the window!"

Gell looked at the screen, at the spot where the lieutenant's finger was pointed. There was nothing there; the room was empty.

Before Linstet could say anything further, Gell said: "Leave him alone, Captain; he's been hypnotized."

IT WAS BETTER than thirty minutes before they got the whole story. Somehow, Ledora Mayne had hypnotized the watching officer through the screen, and then calmly walked out of the door of her cell. The electrolock was still functioning perfectly; but it hadn't stopped the Earth girl.

The guards in the halls had seen no one leave; they had been hypnotized, too.

And now where was she?

Linstet put out a general alarm for the girl, and he and Gell waited in his office for news.

A communicator signalled. "Captain

Linstet? Prime Officer Dorf is waiting."

Linstet looked at the screen. "Put him on."

The spaceman's face smiled from the screen. "The old ship is mined and ready to go, Captain; would you like to watch the explosion?"

Linstet nodded, and the view in the screen suddenly switched to a view of the hulk floating in space.

"Here she goes!" said the unseen officer's voice. The screen was suddenly lit with the awful glare of atomic detonation.

Linstet thanked the officer and cut the connection. "Well, that's part of the job. But what about the girl?"

"She's got to be *somewhere* on the planet," Gell mused. He walked over to the window and looked at the sky. High above, he could still see the dying glow of the exploding spaceship.

"How can we find her?" Linstet asked. "If she can hypnotize a man that easily, no search-party could bring her in."

"I agree," Gell's voice was low. "She could be standing in this room with us now, and we wouldn't know it."

Linstet felt an icy tingle up his back and turned completely around—slowly. He saw only the normal walls of the room, but he knew that meant nothing.

"All right," he said to Gell, "we'll do a little of your theorizing. Where would she logically go? What would she do?"

"That depends. Are we to assume that she is an Enemy agent, or do we assume that she was telling the truth? Or something else?"

"Let us assume," Linstet said deliberately, "that she is an enemy alien, but grant her the intelligence that we originally supposed her to have. Now where would she go?"

"Why, then," said Gell in an odd voice, "why, then, I suppose I would

go to the battle cruiser that was supposed to blow up the old ship."

Captain Linstet's face blanched as he leaped to the communicator again. His first call was to the spaceport.

"Why no, sir," said the man at the other end. "There are no flitters missing—except of course, the one you borrowed two hours ago."

"That wasn't me! That was the girl!" He switched the man off before he had a chance to say anything. Then he tried to get the *Rayvon*; she wouldn't respond, so he called the other battle cruiser.

"The *Rayvon* went into ultradrive immediately after the explosion, Captain. Prime Officer Dorf said that you didn't need him any more, that my own ship would be enough. Is there anything wrong, Captain?"

LINSTET sent out a Galaxy-wide alarm immediately, but the *Rayvon* had vanished. Days dragged into months and nothing happened. Linstet paced floors, cursed at himself, and bit his nails to the quick.

And still nothing happened.

Dr. Gell was beginning to think seriously of having the captain examined by the station psychiatrist when the break finally came.

A Special courier-ship from the secret planet which held the all-powerful Galactic Government landed at the station. A high-ranking civilian stepped out and requested that Captain Linstet, Dr. Gell, and Dr. Kreyman accompany him to the communications room.

"I have here a recording I want you to see," he said briskly. "It is a copy of an original recording brought to the Government by Prime Officer Dorf of the G.I.S. *Rayvon* when he was released by the Earthmen.

"Since it is addressed to you three men, the Government has asked me to play it for you. I am not at liberty to tell you what action the Government is

taking, but I must warn you that if you repeat any of the contents of this recording, it will be considered a Class One breach of security, punishable by death. Is that understood?"

It was.

"Very well, gentlemen, watch."

The screen lit up. On it was the face of the Earthwoman, Ledora Mayne. She began to speak. "This is addressed primarily to the Government of the Human Galaxy, and secondarily to Captain Linstet and Doctors Gell and Kreyman of Kelivar IV.

"By this time, you know that the explosion which destroyed the ship at Kelivar took place after its occupants had been removed. You will also know that the story I told was substantially true. However, we are well aware that no human being who is unable to use the Sessen mind-control system can ever fully trust us. Therefore, we will explain exactly what we intend to do, and exactly how we intend to do it.

"Supreme Commander Grayme of the Earth Fleet will now give you the full details."

She stepped back from the screen, and her face was replaced by that of a handsome, determined-looking man who looked as though he were in his early thirties.

"In the months since Ledora Mayne was brought out of freeze," he began, in a well-modulated baritone, "we have managed to trace and revive the full eight hundred thousand Earthmen who left Earth just before the final attack of the Khethani four thousand years ago. Fortunately, none of the ships had yet reached their destinations.

"We know that you fear us, and we are sorry for that fear; we are not inhuman, and we are not agents of the Khethani.

"However, we have no alternative but to act as we are doing. Already our agents have been planted on the various planets of the Human Galaxy. Slowly and carefully, they will spread

the knowledge of Sessen's system. There will be nothing you can do to stop the process, since the system can be learned very quickly, and you can not consider high intelligence a crime.

"If you announce what I have just told you, the result will be panic, which will only serve to delay the ending of the war against the Great Enemy.

"We will not contact you again, for we will have no need to."

The screen darkened and the man's face was abruptly gone.

Linstet clenched his fists. "There's nothing we can do; absolutely nothing."

"You are not quite correct," said the Government courier. "The Government is going all-out against this sneak invasion, and our methods will improve with time."

Dr. Gell grinned sardonically. "Frankly, gentlemen, I think the Government is wasting its time."

CAPTAIN Linstet was the only one of them who actually saw the beginning of the end.

Five years after the escape of Ledora Mayne, he was transferred, at his own request, to the front, and was upgraded in the process. He was aboard the battleship *Lansen* when the news came that, for the first time in the long history of the war, a ship full of live captives had been captured by the Enemy.

The Prime Officer of the *Lansen* looked grim as the news came over the communicator. "What do you think of it, Linstet?"

"I'd say that within forty-eight hours they will have tested the intelligence of those men and will realize that they have been held back by their own fear for three thousand years."

"Exactly," said the Prime Officer.

Forty-eight hours later, the Khethani struck. Their fleet smashed through a weak spot in the screen of ships that protected the Human Galaxy. For twelve days, despite all the Human

ships could do, the Khethani fleet poured through that fatal gap in the defenses.

Then, inexplicably, the gap closed, as though the humans had gained new strength. And the Khethani fleet met the mighty power of the Second Fleet. Cut off from their home-base by a screen of ships, and cut off from communication by a powerful subether blanket, the Khethani fought hard—and lost. For nine days the battle raged; when it was over, the vast fleet of a million Khethani ships had been reduced to incandescent gases.

Linstet grinned when he heard the news. The Prime Officer of the *Lansen* grinned back.

"It worked, right on schedule. Now

we start pushing the Khethani back. We haven't broken them yet, by a long shot, but we've weakened them; we'll win eventually."

Linstet nodded. "Right. And, by the way; do you remember when Dr. Gell told you that ship had taken a wayward course? He was wrong; it was we who had taken the wayward course until you came along to set us right."

Prime Officer Ledora Mayne laughed. "And you weren't going to have anything to do with us."

Linstet looked her up and down slowly. "I've changed my mind."

One hundred and forty years later, the last hostile Khethani died.



Readin' and Writhin'

TOMORROW, THE STARS, edited by Robert A. Heinlein, Doubleday, 249 pp., \$2.95.

Of the 14 stories in this anthology, by my reckoning, ten are A's, four B's; there are no stinkers at all. This is much too good to be true; it suggests that the collection may be dangerously unbalanced—if I like everything in it, there's sure to be somebody else who won't like anything—but considering that two of the stories were originally published in a magazine I edited, I don't see how I can legally complain.

Heinlein, as his own work shows, is one of those who draw a firm line between science fiction and fantasy; they are, he says in his introduction, "as different as Karl Marx and Groucho Marx." It's a pleasure to be able to disagree, for once, with a writer I admire so strenuously.

Heinlein goes on: "Fantasy is constructed either by denying the real world in *toto* or at least by making a prime basis of the story one or more admittedly false premise—fairies, talking mules, trips through a looking glass, vampires, seacoast Bohemia, Mickey Mouse. But science fiction, *no matter how fantastic its content may seem*, always accepts all of the real world and the entire body of human knowledge concerning the real world as the framework for the fictional speculation."

Granting that the aims of "pure" fantasy and "pure" science fiction differ, are they two rigid compartments, or only the ends of a continuous spectrum (including nine out of the 14 stories in this book) deals not with legitimate extensions of present-day

scientific knowledge but with subjects about which we're allowed to speculate freely, because *nobody knows*—with time travel, for example, or intelligent, volitional robots—but not with an "admittedly false premise" like fairies or talking mules.

It seems to me that the distinction between a newly-invented improbability and a traditional one is an essentially unreal and uninformative distinction; Heinlein, in fact, is claiming something for science which he has no right to claim.

We have no negative knowledge.

We don't *know* that time travel and humanoid robots are impossible; neither do we know that fairies, Carroll's looking-glass world, a literal fundamentalist heaven and hell, or Joseph Smith's golden tablets do not and cannot exist. To choose examples from Heinlein's own work, we don't *know* that the universe is not a set of clever stage-illusions designed to mislead one man; we don't *know* that some whirlwinds may not have intelligence and volition; we don't *know* that witchcraft, properly applied, couldn't manufacture dresses and non-fattening desserts.

Who decides what is an admittedly false premise? Heinlein is in a peculiarly bad position to defend this point; if "Magic, Inc." is fantasy because, among other things, it deals with a genuine witch, then what is "Waldo," which deals, among other things, with a genuine Pennsylvania hex doctor? If "They" is fantasy because it takes solipsism seriously, what about "Be-

[Turn To Page 41]

THE OLDFASHIONED SPACEMAN

by Dave Dryfoos

(illustrated by Paul Orban)

Myron Hines wasn't the worst case, but you might say his was the final straw; here's the story of the expedition which brought forth the modern spaceman.



WE'D CUT our little corner through space-time with the accuracy that men despair of and only machines can accomplish. Earth lay a hundred years and a million miles behind us, as Earth would figure it; but the two of us aboard our dumbbell-shaped cruiser felt we had been out only three months when Terra-nu loomed up to greet us.

Terra-nu was our destination—an unvisited planet, Greek-lettered because the astro-geographers thought it would resemble Earth. We'd come to check their guess, and from a fifty-thousand-foot altitude it seemed a good one.

At least the upper levels of Terra-nu's atmosphere tested like Earth's. Its level-looking surface appeared to be covered with the blue-green of vegetation, except where masked by pink-lined tufts of morning mist; and occasional silver glints highlighted the probability of open water. Everything looked as the astro-geographers had anticipated—terrestrial in style, habitable by terrestrial life.

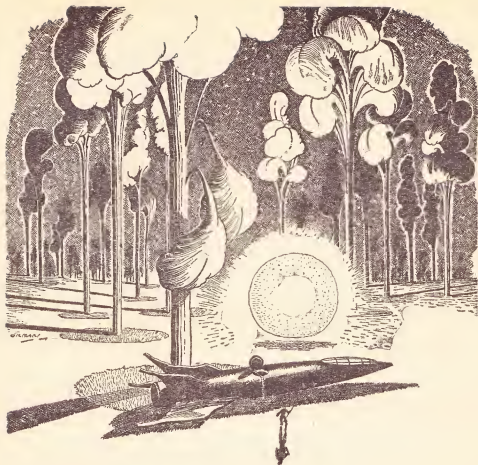
The astro-geographers had warned us that the dawn we now saw would be followed by three weeks of continuous daylight. But they hadn't told us to expect the greeting Terra-nu sent out.

My partner didn't even see it. He was Myron Hines, an oldfashioned spaceman. Myron was too busy with his fruitless searching for some sign of intelligent life down below us to see the golden, twelve-foot fireball that danced on our ship's twin noses. Back and forth that fireball flitted in lazy, graceful arcs from the drive-hull to our own operations-hull, then to the drive again, as if trying to see which was the higher.

I shifted controls to drop the drive-hull low. The fireball bounced to our operations-hull and hovered just in front of the dorsal periscopes, within fifteen feet of me. I thought the shift to the higher point meant the fireball was a corposant, or St. Elmo's Fire—a form of electrical brush-discharge that on Earth has been given many names, though no real explanation.

A corposant is supposed to be harmless so I saw no reason to call the fireball to Myron's attention. He wasn't seeking oddities, but humanoids; besides, we weren't speaking.

That wasn't my fault. Myron was apparently neurotic. For instance, people sometimes eat a lot to ease a sense of insecurity; Myron ate much and often. Excessive sleep can be an escape; Myron Hines was forever sleeping. Extreme romanticism can be schizoid; he was always reading either poetry or fiction.



The fireball hovered over the ship . . .

But I'd never said a thing. It was he who, after complaining of loneliness, had one day brought our talking to an end. "Cousin John," he growled, "your jabber wearies me. Let me hear your silence for a while."

Up to a point I could have argued, but in a showdown I had to take his orders. So for the past month he'd heard only my silence and the few sounds of our travel: the faint hum transmitted along the hundred-foot boom from the gravitronic drive to our operations-hull; the squeaky pinging of ceramic-clad alloys under stress; the hiss-clang-hiss of passage through a dustcloud; the siren's warning scream

when we swerved in automatic evasive action to clear larger chunks of interstellar matter.

If he'd been listening then, while that fireball grew from twelve to fifty feet in diameter, Myron might have heard the faint crackle of electricity—a sound like paper rattled, or autumn leaves tossed in the wind. But he was humming in a monotone; he heard nothing but himself.

I could feel the growth of that fireball through the handles I had to manipulate in controlling this final, atmospheric portion of our flight. Electricity flowed through me so that I jittered; my coordination seemed affected.

I WAS ABOUT to call Myron when suddenly the ship lurched. Instrument-needles danced drunkenly. Atmosphere-operative control surfaces contorted limply, yet resisted all my jerks and pressures. Metal grated on metal with skirling shrieks.

Myron rushed to my aid, but stumbled repeatedly as our gyrations flung him off balance. When he reached me his cheeks had paled beneath their freckles, and his blue eyes were narrowed. "Move over, Coz," he ordered. "Let a *man* take charge."

I moved. He reached for the controls; but before he actually touched a switch or handle, he felt the fireball's electricity. His russet hair and copper beard rose as if blasted with air. His eyes popped wide. Sparks snapped from his extended fingers.

Myron collapsed with a faint cry. His skull thudded against the deck and he lay there twitching. I took over again and switched for emergency chutes. Nothing happened; I had to leave the pilot's position and crank out the chutes by main strength.

Meanwhile the ship fluttered downward like a moulted feather. Myron's limp body slewed around the compartment, leaving shreds of skin from his exposed face and hands sticking to irregular surfaces. He had acquired a well-bloodied nose and a gashed cheek before the chutes took hold.

Even with their help, we crashed. I blacked out.

Myron was poking at me when my consciousness returned. He had a badly-marked face and an awkward stoop, as if his back were lame. But he could smile. "Hiya, Coz," he said. "Are you in working order?"

"More or less," I said tentatively, after checking to see if I could move. "And you?"

"More or less."

"How's the ship?"

"Bad! This hull's half torn off the boom. The plates are cracked clean through where the twist came. And



there's other damage where the hull hit the ground."

"Oh? And where does this warm air come from?"

"Terra-nu," Myron said. "I feel all right so far." He grinned at me like a death's-head. "Just think of all the time I saved by breathing this air before we tested it."

"You haven't saved an instant," I said, getting up. "With alien air in here, we'll be in Decontamination on the moon for a year. If we get back, that is. And—"

"When we get back, Coz; don't be depressingly literal. And tell me what made us crash. That fireball that's out on our boom?"

"Apparently," I said. "It's electrical, and it fouled up our circuits. If it were on our highest point it might be the harmless discharge I originally thought, but—"

"But it's not. We're in the middle of a park-like forest, with tree-things towering over us all around. And the boom isn't even the high point of the ship—the drive-hull's higher."

"So the fireball's a Terra-nuvian. And it's already caused us to crash; it must be our enemy. Let's get the ship spaceborne and go tell Earth this is an unsafe place. We can—"

"If we're going to get spaceborne we'd better get acquainted with that thing," Myron said. "Maybe it can tell us whether Man could live here. Maybe it will help us fix the ship."

"Yes," I said. "But maybe it's waiting out there to kill you. And why waste time? We can do a lot from inside the ship while we wait for that thing to go away."

"And if it doesn't go away? No, Coz, if we're in its power, we're in its power, so let's see what it wants. I'm going out there."

AND HE DID. Not just then, because the hatch was sprung and required much prying. But as soon as we got it open he went through. I closed it after him and watched through periscopes.

The ground under his feet was red and moist. Covering it in fifty-foot circular patches about three hundred feet apart was a soft mossy carpeting of blue. From the center of each blue circle rose a huge corrugated yellow column, nine feet thick at the base and two hundred fifty feet high. The lower hundred feet were bare. The top hundred fifty feet looked like an immense green ostrich-feather.

The drive-hull lay against a tree that had been half stripped of branches by our fall. The operations-hull had landed in the open, but should have been shadowed like the surrounding ground by the high, feather-topped trees.

It wasn't. The whole area was lighted by the fireball perched on—or, rather, an inch or two above—the center of our boom. Myron walked smiling up to the boom and extended to the fireball a hand that hardly trembled. Instantly he was flat on his back on the damp red soil. The fireball had left its perch and hovered over his head.

I went for the hatch. It had stuck again; I couldn't budge it by myself.

I watched Myron under magnifica-

tion. His eyelids fluttered; his chest rose and fell. Vagrant smiles flitted across his face. His hands jerked occasionally. Once his feet made a few running motions. He certainly seemed to be dreaming. And the fireball hovered over his head.

After several minutes, it darted to its former perch on the boom. Hissing, it returned to Myron. Crackling, it went back to the boom.

Myron's eyes opened. He sat up, yawned, and stared vacantly around. He smiled stupidly. Then looking vaguely pleased with himself, he sham-bled over to the hatch. Together, we opened it. He tumbled casually in and left it open. I shut it after him quickly. He gaped at me with a moronic grin I couldn't decipher.

"The ground here seems damp," I said finally. "You'd better go change your clothes."

"Yup." He stared at me drunkenly.

"You've had two bad electric shocks," I went on. "Have they made you ill?"

"Nope." He grinned at me a little more alertly, and added, "Stop worrying, Coz; I'm on the right track. I was asleep out there. Asleep, and dreaming; and the fireball somehow communicated with me during that dream."

"The fact of communication was what you dreamed," I stated. "No doubt it was all in perfect English?"

"No. Wordless. Sort of like a mood. I felt good. I still feel good. I swear that thing is friendly, Coz."

"Change your clothes," I said. "You should have changed outside. It's the ultimate contamination of the ship to come in with clothing stained by the native soil. One would think—"

"We were contaminated by our crash. And there are no more degrees of contamination than there are degrees of pregnancy," Myron said, laughing at me. "Fix some food while I change, will you, Coz."

He ate slowly, reflectively, untastefully. Finished, he pushed aside his plate and said, "I wonder if they have thunderstorms here."

"I don't know. Why?"

"Just before I woke up, I dreamed of a thunderstorm. I think I was supposed to—that the dream was a query. So I'm going out and try to let the fireball know that I think thunderstorms are impressive spectacles. Maybe it will exhibit one."

"If you're not all wet now, you soon will be," I scoffed. "The fireball won't entertain you with an act of suicide, though I wish it would. If it were to consume itself as a thunderstorm, we might get the ship fixed."

"Oh, it wouldn't have to *become* a storm," Myron said thoughtfully. "It might just *exhibit* one. Or even merely start one, like silver iodide. I doubt it would *be* the storm and I doubt that it *is* the fireball. These things are just manifestations of organized energy."

"What object *isn't* a manifestation of organized energy?" I said. "Only thing is, the fireball's not an object, because it's disembodied."

"There may be similar organizations of disembodied energy down on Earth," Myron said.

"Like what?"

"Like the soul." He reached over and gave me a sympathetic pat. "You have no idea what I experienced, asleep out there."

"What you experienced out there was a nice hoggish wallow in the mud," I said. "But wallow again. Maybe this time you can dream up a beautiful sow."

He laughed and went out, leaving the hatch open. I climbed half way through to watch.

BEFORE Myron lay down, I could catch glimpses between the tree-tops of a clear blue sky. Five minutes after he closed his eyes, it was pouring. The rain awakened him. He

jumped up and ran for the hatch, climbed through and helped me close it against the storm. Lightning played on our hull. The thunder was so loud we couldn't converse till we'd shut out the storm.

Grinning then, he turned to me and said, "Next time, the sow."

"You mean—"

"Exactly. A girl. The Presence here can use me for a model. The differences between a man and a girl are relatively few, and in my next dream, I'll concentrate on those differences."

"That I can believe," I said. "But I'll bet there's no more fireball."

There was, though. And Myron was out communing with it before the steaming ground had dried. He took a poncho to lie on, and the mud under the moss must have made a nice soft bed. But he seemed too excited to sleep, and soon returned, demanding sleeping pills.

It seemed to me time to call a halt. I said, "You're acting much too youthful, with this concentration on a dreamgirl while your ship stands in need of repair. A little work will help you sleep. And—"



"Why shouldn't I act youthful?" he said teasingly.

"Well," I said, "figuring from Earth's space-time coordinates, you're a hundred twenty-nine years old, just about."

"Oh, don't be so literal-minded; be-

sides, we're not in Earth's space-time coordinates now."

He jumped up and clicked his heels in midair to prove his point, though the effect of his coltishness was to prove mine. He took his pill and went out. I watched through the periscope, afraid there'd be more rain.

Soon he slept. The fireball came and hovered over him, gradually swelling till it touched two trees that were three hundred feet apart.

There was a sudden sharp crack!—a blinding flash. When the light died away, a nude girl stood over Myron. She had the same sort of red hair and blue eyes that he did, and the same quickness of decision. Without a moment's hesitation, she grabbed the corner of his poncho, and tugged vigorously to get it out from under him. He remained in deep sleep and didn't budge.

She seemed to be having a lot to say, but I couldn't hear her voice. Every radiation detector in the ship chattered its fastest. The combined rattle drowned out all other sounds.

I cranked the hand-hooter for battle-stations. The girl shrieked an echo to its horrendous howl. Myron jumped up, seized the poncho in one hand and the girl's wrist in the other, and dashed for the hatch.

"Don't bring her here," I shouted. "Don't bring her here!"

He forced her into the ship and swiftly followed. As soon as he'd slammed the hatch, the counters lessened their rate of chatter.

The girl cowered in a corner, trying to cover her nudity with hands and arms in a gesture as old as Eve. Myron flung the poncho to her and jumped to his battle-station at the combat controls. There he waited tensely for the scanner's vocalizer to give him target coordinates and description so he could choose which weapon to fire.

Nothing happened, of course. The drive was completely shut down, so

none of the fire-control equipment would even operate.

MYRON blazed with fury when he realized that. "What's the idea?" he demanded of me. "Where's the target?"

"Right behind you," I said. "The girl is a source of massive radiation."

Hearing no great amount of chatter from the counters; seeing, when he scanned them, only moderate readings on the indicators, he flushed with rage. "There's no source of heavy radiation here, and there probably never was," he shouted. "What's the matter with you, anyway? First you pilot us into a crash, and then you—"

"I—I'm sorry to have been so much trouble," the girl broke in to say. She now wore the green poncho, with her tawny red-haired head poked through the central slit and the sides tucked around her some way that formed the plastic sheet into a garment. Its color made her eyes look green.

"It was my fault," she went on, staring down at her own bare toes. "I—well—materialized from the fireball, by changing the energy-level of all my electrons. And of course they gave off radiation when changing energy-level."

"A flash of light to brighten my life," Myron said. He stepped quickly down from his battle station and with a gentle finger lifted her chin. Their identical-looking eyes met. Each blushed faintly.

"Didn't Bishop Berkeley have something to say about materialization?" Myron asked her. "I mean, didn't he say that reality is the dream perceived?"

"Something like that," she said, smiling vaguely. "I don't know any more about it than you do, though. My knowledge is your knowledge—I have only a copy of your mind."

"But then you must know the danger to him of a massive dose of radiation," I said. "You should never have ma-

terialized while he was outside the ship. You may have—"

"Cut it out, Coz," Myron warned.

"Wait, Myron," she said. "I do know, now, that I did the wrong thing. I didn't know, though, before I existed in this form, because I didn't have a copy of your mind, before. I'd never have done it, if I'd known... though all I did was give reality to your dream... and I'm not dangerous now—"

"Of course not," Myron said stoutly. "And I'm glad you didn't know, if there's a chance the knowledge might have made you hesitate." He slipped an arm around her waist and glared fiercely at me over the top of her head. She let her hair brush his shoulder a second before deftly slipping away from him. They had no eyes for me.

"This is serious!" I insisted. "Myron, take a glance at your pocket radiation indicator."

He got it out, and the girl crowded close to peer over his shoulder at it. "Oh!" she gasped, hand over mouth.

The indicator showed total exposure—a dosage greater than it could measure.

Big tears formed in the girl's eyes. "I don't want to harm you, Myron," she said. "I'll go away."

Myron pulled her to him gently and buried her face on his chest. Out of the corner of his mouth he growled, "Coz, if you drive her to dematerialize—"

"Wouldn't think of it," I said hastily. "Another dose of radiation would really fix you. She'd better stay here till we see how sick you're going to be from the first one. Time's getting shorter all the while, and there's probably more work to fixing the ship than I can handle alone—particularly if I have to take care of you, so—"

"You haven't even looked at the ship," Myron sneered. "All you've managed to do is steer into a crash and sound a false battle-stations alarm and argue."

"Have you checked the ship?" I asked. "Have you been getting the feel

of this planet, as you're supposed to—or of this lady, merely?"

"The lady is the planet's most important manifestation," he snarled. "You've got your wires crossed!"

THE GIRL stepped behind Myron and peered at me from around him. I could see he thought it was my fault that she'd disengaged herself from his embrace. I said, "You're the one who's getting crossed, not me. Anyhow, there's no point studying Terranu's manifestations if we can't get the information back to Earth, so suppose we start fixing the ship."

"I'm busy," he snapped, and turned toward the girl.

"Please, Myron," she said, gently turning him around again. "If you could lend me some clothes, and find something to do outside while I get into them..."

Hastily he said, "Excuse me, Honey." Then, glaring defiantly at me, he gave her a pecking kiss that she tried to dodge but caught on the end of her nose.

I went outside then, for the first time, and he joined me almost immediately. After looking at a few other things he squatted down beside me to check the cracked bottom plates of the operations-hull, and when he stood up again he swayed and pressed his forehead. "A little dizziness," he muttered. "Been squatting too long."

I said nothing.

He next inspected the point where the boom joined the operations-hull. The plates there had been pried at with considerable leverage when the drive-hull hit the tree, and were damaged. The drive-hull wasn't hurt, though. "We can fix the ship," he said, "but I'm tired now."

He turned to the girl, who'd joined us wearing one of Myron's jumpers and looking like a barefoot boy in hand-me-down overalls. "Honey," he said, "you'll show me around a little

while Cousin John lays out our tools, won't you?"

"I'd love to," she replied. Her teeth were white behind the generous red lips. She let him take her hand. They walked a few aimless steps into the woods, looking at each other and not where they were going. Their hips and shoulders bumped with seeming clumsiness at every step.

"Wait!" I called. "The tools'll get laid out twice as fast if you help, Myron."

"I don't feel like it," he said dully. He reached a long arm to lean on a nearby tree, turning to face me. "There must have been something wrong with the stuff you fed me."

Before I could even deny it, he'd gone behind the tree to be sick.

Honey followed. "Go away!" he told her. "You might catch this."

"Don't go anywhere, Miss," I said, running up to join them. "He knows—so you must also know—that this is acute radiation syndrome. He got it from you; you'll have to help him."

"Go away, Honey," Myron insisted. "I've got to have some privacy."

"I'll go," she agreed, "but I won't go far. Maybe Cousin John can find some medicine for me to give you."

I could, and I did, though he wasn't given all the medicine at that particular time. For use as needed, I gave Honey whole blood to keep up the red-cell count; penicillin to help ward off infection; and toluidine blue to limit bleeding.

Also I dug out a tent and cot. There would have to be a lot of pounding on that damaged operations-hull, so I thought Myron might as well sleep elsewhere. I told Honey to take Myron's usual bunk, but she refused pointblank and stayed in the tent with him. She also insisted on preparing his food, so before working on the ship I decided to unload all the quartermaster type stores to provide her with immediate access to everything she might need.

Once that job was done, though, I was free to work on the ship—alone. I did what I could for a few Earthdays. Then Myron began to feel a little better, and got up. He again insisted on exploring with Honey. I again vetoed the idea.

"But I feel fine!" he argued.

"You don't feel fine at all," I stated. "You feel a little better than you did at your worst. You know the course of this disease as well as I do— You're having the usual remission and that's all. You've got to help fix the ship while you're able, so we can get you away from here and restore your health."

"But I want to have a little picnic for Honey now," he said plaintively. "Her nursing probably saved my life, the last couple of days."

"Maybe so," I said for her to hear. "But if she thinks she saved you for her own pleasure, she has another think coming. We came here with certain duties to perform, and we're going to perform them."

"Honey doesn't need you to tell her what to do," Myron shouted angrily, "and neither do I. We'll do as we please!"

"You know he's going to have a relapse, don't you, Miss?" I said, ignoring him.

"Yes..."

"Do you know *when* he will relapse?"

"No..."

"Then suppose you make him stay here, where he can be taken care of."

Her shoulder drooped inside the too-large jumper. "All right," she said.

"Oh, come on, Honey," Myron said. She drew herself straight. "No," she said, "we're going to repair this ship. And when it's done, you're going to get into it and go back where you came from."

AND THAT was that. Myron couldn't budge her. So far as his illness let him, he vented his frus-

tration in hard work, but that was the only satisfaction he got for a while.

Hard work was really needed, too. Damage was worse than we'd thought. When we got the damaged plates off the place where the boom joined the operations-hull, we found the frame was cracked.

Myron had to jury-rig some climbing irons, go up a tree part way, and fasten a block there before we could even get a purchase on some of the damaged members. And when we got them all out on the ground it turned out there just weren't enough replacement units to go around.

We would have to weld and refit some of the broken parts. But our drive was gravitronic, so we had no source of either heat or electricity to weld the extreme-service alloys the ship was made of.

I asked Honey if she had any way to generate an electric current for welding use. "I could try," she said. "I never before existed in human form so I don't know its limitations. But we could find out."

"No!" Myron said explosively. "There's no telling what might happen if you try that. You might disappear completely, or die, or revert to a fireball. Forget it. If we can't leave, we'll stay."

"Get that idea out of your mind." I said. "You can't stay. Millions of dollars worth of training and equipment were invested in this trip by a lot of people who are not here to watch out for their interests. You've got to report back to them. You can't leave any stone unturned. Your life has a value to others, if not to yourself."

"To me, for one," Honey said.

"But *your* life has value to *me*," he said fretfully.

They stared at each other till I said, "All right. Love is grand. But do I have to stay here forever?"

"No, you don't, Cousin John," Honey said promptly. "But you're really trying to protect Myron and not your-

self, and I appreciate that. So I'm going to get the electricity so you can weld your ship together."

She wouldn't let Myron talk her out of that but insisted that we get all set and ready to weld. A lot of improvising was needed before we'd assembled rods and cables and an eye-shield and the rest of the paraphernalia. So when she left us I was busy trying out ways of holding the work and Myron was fitting himself with a helmet, and neither of us saw her go.

I don't know what she did nor how she did it. But she carried one end of a long cable into the woods, and at the other end we got current enough to finish the job.

When the parts were all fixed I made Myron help install them to keep him from wandering in search of Honey. For a long time he worked hard, and when he finally decided to lay off and rest a while, I knew he'd gotten too tired to stray.

He fell asleep under a tree and when he awoke he was sick again. He'd lost all interest in the repair-work—was apathetic and even absent-minded. This was the third of the four phases of acute radiation syndrome.

Nothing new about the disease—it's been known on Earth since 1945. But our scheduled time on Terra-nu was about up, and Myron's symptoms would complicate our departure. Honey was an additional complication. I hoped she'd stay away.

Myron didn't. In time he got so sick he couldn't stand, but he flatly refused to go to his bunk, or even rest in the tent. He sat leaning against a tree looking hopefully around as long as he could hold his head up. Eventually the effort exhausted him and he fell asleep.

I'd been working inside, and happened to come up through the hatch just as Honey appeared between the trees. Fatigue showed in every drooping line of her. Something about her looked different, strange. At first I

couldn't figure out what it was because by now the sun was low and everything in sight was suffused with pink. Then I saw that Honey's tawny hair had turned white.

Myron saw it at about the same time. There hadn't been any noise so he must have sensed her presence. He awoke and gave a low groan and staggered to his feet. She tottered toward him and they collapsed on one another, each propping the other up. She wept and it could have been her own exhaustion or grief at seeing Myron so sick again, or joy at seeing him at all. Myron patted her and cooed in her ear.

I GAVE THEM a minute and then I went out and said, "Thank you, Honey. You've saved Myron's life."

Myron turned to me and said, "Admit she's made it possible for you to leave, Coz."

"Sure," I said. "She certainly has, Myron; she's made it possible for us both to leave."

"I'm not going," he said flatly.

"Don't be silly," I answered. "You've got to go. It's your duty."

"Can't—can't he stay a little while longer?" Honey begged. "Just a short time?" They were still clinging together. He kissed her.

I said, "It'll be dark here soon. We can't stay through your three-weeks-long night."

"I could take care of you," Honey said.

"I know," I told her. "But the configuration of our own Solar System will be wrong if we don't leave on schedule. We haven't got the power to get past our Sun when it's between us and our home planet. We've got to stick to the time-table because it was figured pretty close to begin with."

She'd known all that before I said it, sharing Myron's mind. But she'd wanted to hear it and when I finished she kissed him and said, "He's right.

It's unanswerable; you've got to go."

"I won't," he said.

"He's sick," I reminded her. "His judgment's impaired. Don't—I hate to say this, but—don't let him commit suicide by staying here."

"No, no!" she promised. "I'll go with him."

That meant her judgment was impaired, too. I had to explain: "We go backward in time, Honey. You wouldn't exist when we got to Earth, even if you started out with us. You can't come."

"You don't have to rub it in," Myron said. "She's sick. Can't you see that? She got sick fulfilling your terrible demands. Leave her alone, Coz, understand? Understand?"

"But Myron," I said. "If you stay, you may even die of this radiation-illness. And if she's so sick, how can she help you? Come home with me, and simply by going back in time to Earth's space-time coordinates, you'll reach a point at which the illness will never have been. On Earth you'll be perfectly well—perfectly."

"That's right, dear," Honey said, leaning her head on his chest and stroking the back of his neck. "And you won't miss me—you won't even remember me. So why delay?"

"That's why!" he said, pushing her to arm's length and looking into her eyes. "I don't want to forget you."

"But you may die!" I protested.

"Probably not," he said mildly. "I don't feel as if I were going to die. It's hard to tell with this radiation thing. But mental states help, and with Honey to nurse me there's a good chance I'll pull through."

"But only a chance!" I said. "Come with me, and your future's a certainty."

"A gloomy one, without Honey. I just don't want it."

"Oh, Myron," she began. Then she sobbed and was silent—apparently too tired to go on arguing in favor of some-

thing she feared. I had to do the talking.

"You can't risk death for a figment of your imagination," I said to Myron. "You can't chance death on a strange planet for a mere dream. I mean—well—there's nothing so mere about Honey, but she is a dream, isn't she? I mean—"

"You mean well," he said, grinning at me. "But of course I can die for a dream. How could I ever have come to Terra-nu in the first place if I weren't the sort that would chance death on a strange planet for a mere dream? Maybe you can't understand it, Coz, but that's what a spaceman is. And I'm ordering you to leave me here and go on home to Earth by yourself."

He turned, took Honey's hand, and stumbled toward the tent.

"If you stay," I said, "I'm duty bound to report this place is dangerous, Myron. So you're making me be-

tray Honey—or the Presence she represents."

"We crashed, didn't we?" he said, helping Honey into the tent. "The danger's real: there's no betrayal." He ducked under the tent-flap and was gone.

"You're also betraying Mankind!" I shouted after him. "They'll never again send a spaceman like you to a strange planet!"

They haven't, either. When I watched Myron disappear into that tent with his Honey, I was seeing the last of the oldfashioned spacemen.

It had always seemed pretty silly to send men on those fast space-time trips that they couldn't remember without artificial aids. It was plain stupid to send them if they would refuse to come back. So thereafter only the aids were sent.

From that time to this, all space-exploration has been done by us robots.

★



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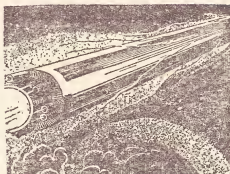
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

The Payoff

by Eando Binder



They were plunging toward Earth at a speed that nearly wrecked the ship — but no one could remember why!

AMNESIA had always been just a word in the dictionary before to Captain Van Archberg. But now it had leaped from the dictionary upon him, and upon his crew of five. Awakening as if from a deep sleep, none of them had the slightest idea why they were in a ship in space.

"Some situation," Archberg summed it up, cutting off their confused babble. "Each of us knows his name and duties running the ship. Those long-standing facts and reflexes stuck with us. But somehow, we've lost all memory of *this trip* itself. Anybody have an idea how it happened?"

"I think we hit a space-warp," spoke up Kronin. "Some are known that can wreck a ship. Maybe we hit one that did no physical damage, but instead gave us a cranial jolt or trauma." Kronin, besides the radio-man, was the ship's doctor. "Could be the warp erased our recent memory-patterns." He shrugged.

"Next," said Archberg, "where are

we going and where have we been?"

Pillbury answered, the flight engineer. "The instruments show we're heading back to Earth, and according to the flight-curve, from Pluto. But listen, here's the big thing; we're going at terrific speed, even for the Starblast Drive. It's rated at a top speed of half-light. Yet right now we're barreling along at a peak of 100,000 miles a second, which means we almost burned out the motors during acceleration. Why did we take that chance?"

Six faces questioned one another dumbly, and anxiously.

"Have you all felt it too?" put in Dawson tensely. "A sort of *urgency* about all this? As if it was very vital for us to get back to Earth?"

All of them nodded, feeling the nervous tension that carried over from before the memory-blackout.

"We can't remember why," said Archberg, baffled, "but we can *feel* this trip was something important. So it boils down to that mystery—just

why are we racing back to Earth at breakneck speed?"

"What if this mission," breathed Larch, "is something *big*? Look how it adds up. Six topnotch A-1 spacemen, which we know we are, with probably the fastest ship ever built on Earth, snashing through space at over half light-speed. It might actually involve the fate of the world. Melodramatic? Maybe so, maybe not."

Archberg forced himself calm. "Let's not go off the deep end, men. First, this may have been just a routine exploration-trip, or maybe a follow-up of a previous lost expedition."

"With this strong feeling of urgency among us all?" snapped Jefferson. "I say it's something more significant, like being sent to get help from the Pluto Wisemen, rated as intellectual giants."

"Or," chimed in Kronin, "it might be a raging epidemic on Earth, from space-germs, and we went to Pluto for some antibiotic cure."

"How about a warning we're carrying back to Earth," guessed Dawson, "of some deep-space danger we stumbled on, like a runaway comet?"

"I'll go you one better," said Pillbury without flippancy, for the mood was grim upon them all. "Suppose the sun is scheduled to explode, and we were sent to arrange for the migration of the human race to Pluto—which would be far enough away to escape destruction?"

"One more angle," finished Larch. "What if we were sent to scout some space-enemy from another star, massed near or on Pluto? And maybe it was they who flung some sort of memory-blot ray after us, to keep their battle plans secret."

Archberg threw up his hands. "Five possible big reasons we went to Pluto and we can't remember a thing. And worst of all, we're still far beyond radio-range, passing Jupiter's orbit now.

We're flying in a vacuum of ignorance."

He snapped erect, guiltily. "No use brooding about it. Only one sensible thing to do; reach Earth as fast as we possibly can. At your posts, men."

THEY DROVE on for Earth, six men lost in an unreal fog of amnesia. Was Earth waiting for them in frantic frenzy? So it seemed as they began braking past the asteroids, and radio finally ghosted in.

"Attention, Spaceship, *Orion*," came an authoritative, excited voice. "We've cleared all space-lanes for you, straight through to Atlantic Spaceport on Earth. Keep going at your top speed."

"Tell me," yelled back Archberg. "What is this all about?"

No answer; the other end had clicked off, seconds before his voice leaped the distance between. Archberg ground his teeth. But it wouldn't be long now before they landed on Earth.

They tore past blurred Mars, and the moon, hit the atmosphere screamingly, and the final jolt landing tossed them hard on the floor. Archberg was the first to stagger out, ignoring his broken arm. What would he tell them, the men running up eagerly? Those cheering, waiting millions? "Excuse us, but what did you send us for?" It was funny—as funny as somebody falling into an atomic pile.

"We failed," is what Archberg did say first. "All the way to Pluto and back at top-speed plus, but we failed miserably—"

"Are you crazy?" yelled a voice, whose owner was pounding him on the back. "You didn't fail. How could any



other ship beat you and your crew? You broke all records, Archberg—you won!"

"Won?" echoed Archberg, bracing himself for a shock.

Behind him, Jefferson sat down on the ground and bawled; Pillbury

screamed; the others swore and stared.

Archberg stared too, at the giant banner.

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READIN' AND WRITHIN'

(continued from page 27)

yond *This Horizon*," which deals at least half-seriously with the identical subject? And what about the metempsychosis in the same novel?

Varied as they are, the stories in this volume—the ten A's among them, anyhow—have one thing in common with each other and with Heinlein's own work: each is a pretty good approximation of the last word on its subject. Nobody has ever improved on "Universe," although a good many reckless people have tried, because Heinlein said it all. For the same reason, these are stories that can be depended upon to last awhile; nothing written in the foreseeable future is likely to make this book a dead weight on your shelf.

Jack Finney's "I'm Scared" postulates a queer kind of involuntary time-travel, and builds it with infinite care into a genuinely frightening thing—a rarity in what Heinlein calls science fiction, or in what he calls fantasy, for that matter.

C. M. Kornbluth's "The Silly Season" is an outrageously logical formula for the invasion of Earth. This story has a history that goes back to the dear dead forties, when a group of threadbare young writers, including Kornbluth, the undersigned, and the editor of this magazine, were associated in a Manhattan kaffeeklatsch called the Futurian Society; it derives, if I am not mistaken, from an idea Kornbluth and I worked out together for a cops-and-robbers story Walter Kubilius wanted to write. Rather than try to get my one percent out of the author, I hereby relinquish all rights to my half of the notion, which Kornbluth has improved out of all recognition anyhow (the original involved photoelectric beams, bats smuggled into a bank in briefcases, and large quantities of pinochle-playing policemen).*

"The Report on the Barnhouse Effect," by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., deals with a very old idea in science-fiction, the notion that one man of good will, armed with an irresistible weapon, could make our society sane. C. S. Forester, R. DeWitt Miller and many others have tried their hands at it, but I don't think it's ever been done quite so compactly or with so much sparkle.

BOB TUCKER, a fixture in science-fantasy fandom for twenty-odd years and more lately one of the most brilliant writers in the business, immortalized my first contribution to any magazine in a wonderful fan-sheet called *Le Zombie*. It would be nice to be able to say that I bought his first professional story, but somebody else—I think Fred Pohl—beat me to it about ten years before "The Tourist Trade" was written.** Anyhow, this is a very funny story; it deals with an irreverent aspect of time-travel which Tucker and John Wyndham hit upon almost simultaneously; and without derogation to Wyndham, a veteran science-fiction writer and still one of the best, Tucker's version is much the better of the two.

"Rainmaker," by John Reese, is what Heinlein calls it, "almost a period piece"; it was first published in 1949, since when rainmaking has become as much a part of the mundane world as the atom bomb; nevertheless, this is science fiction of the purest type—and a thumping good story.

The spontaneous-human-mutation story, these days, is pretty nearly dead, partly of a surfeit, but also partly because of some spectacularly good writing. The major culprits are Henry and Catherine Kuttner: like Heinlein, like any master craftsman, they will not and cannot let a subject go until they have exhausted its possibilities, leaving nothing for the next man to do but to go and find a subject of his own. This one was a massive job, but they killed it in sections, painstakingly exploring one aspect at a time in such memorable stories as "Margin For Error," the Baldy series—and this volume's "Absalom."

* Walter Kubilius *did* write the story; it appeared in the August 1942 issue of *Future combined with Science Fiction*, under Walt's penname, J. S. Klimaris. Title was, "The Case of the Vanishing Gelsers". RWL

** It was "Interstellar Way Station", in the May 1941 issue of *Super Science Novels Magazine*, which Frederik Pohl edited. RWL

"The Monster," by Lester del Rey, and "Jay Score," by Eric Frank Russell, must have been selected and paired deliberately; published ten years apart, both are based on the same trick-ending gimmick—which has, besides, been used so often by lesser writers that experienced editors can spot it on the first page of a slush-pile submission—and yet each is so different from the other, and so very good in its own way, that they don't conflict, even when placed side by side, as they are in this volume.

"Beleaguered Bridge," by William Tenn, is typically wry, ingenious and witty, but it's a story which has always seemed to me in some obscure way disappointing. I think perhaps the trouble is that its development, wry &c. as it is, is too conventional, too much What the Editor Thinks He Wants; and that the same author's more recent "Liberation of Earth" (*Future*, May 1953)—the funniest story he's ever written, and about as equivocal as a punch in the solar plexus—may have expressed what he really wanted to say all along. If I'm right, it merely proves what needs no proof—that Tenn is another artist who won't stop till he's had the last word.

Judith Merrill's stories are of two types: sweat-tears-and-baby-urine variety, which Judy apparently writes simply because some editors expect nothing else from a woman, and one paragraph of which is sufficient to make me feel unclean; and the cerebral, quietly-competent game of wits with her readers, at which she works equally hard, often with brilliant results. "Survival Ship" belongs to the latter category; if you are one of the twenty million readers who did not see this story in its original publication, printed on second-hand pulp paper and distributed exclusively in Lower Slobovia, you may try to guess what vital fact Miss Merrill is concealing from you before she's ready to let you know; my money is on the author.

Murray Leinster, science-fantasy's Grand Old Man, evidently writes the stuff for love, since his alter ego—Will Jenkins—makes a great deal more money; however, he knows all the tricks in the game and uses them, too often, as a substitute for conscious attention. "Keyhole" is a conventional story written in Leinster's worst style, which is one precarious step above that of "Peter Rabbit"; it is by no means a bad story—if Leinster has ever written a stinker, it must have been long before my time—but it's neither the first or the last word that will be written on its subject.

Isaac Asimov's contribution has an ugly but accurate title: "Misbegotten Missionary." It poses a difficult practical problem, develops it with skill, and solves it—regrettably—by accident; what disappoints me more in the story (which might have been a great one), is that it also suggests a very delicate problem of values, and not only does not solve it—I'll admit that this would be too much to ask—but leaves it entirely

out of account.

William Morrison, most of whose work has been cautiously conventional, has written in "The Sack" a very controlled and perceptive treatment of the "dangerous knowledge" theme—which is philosophical in nature (purists please note), whether it appears in a fairy tale or in "Tomorrow, the Stars." My only major complaint here is that Morrison, who is a chemist and ought to know better, insists on inventing unlikely organisms and establishing them in even unlikely places, without any attempt to justify either.

Finally there is "Poor Superman" by Fritz Leiber, who, when he keeps his sense of wonder and his sense of humor simultaneously in gear, is unfailingly rewarding—particularly so when he is sticking pins in some prominent member or other of the American Paranoids' Association—e. g., Mickey Spillane in "The Night He Cried," or, in the present case, our old friend Alfred van Vogt.

I have a feeling that this book may not be selling as heavily as it deserves to do, partly because Doubleday has put it into one of its paper-saving ghetto volumes, so compressed that they look like about seventy-five cents' worth, and partly because it contains only 14 stories. If I'm right, this is a great pity. Rush out and buy a copy, please.

BALLROOM OF THE SKIES, by John D. MacDonald. Greenberg, 206 pp., \$2.75.

John D. MacDonald, as I have remarked before, is a talented and industrious writer. Unfortunately, there are times when the second quality is more in evidence than the first. If this *bumper roman* was written over a weekend, as seems altogether likely, his industry is unquestionable. Aside from two good and only partly-wasted ideas, and an occasional passage of effective dramatic writing, the book contains no perceptible trace of talent.

The man-sized cardboard figures who inhabit its pages include Dale Lorin, ex-news-paperman, later assistant to Darwin Branson, a world-saving diplomat who is murdered and bleeds woodpulp in Chapter 1; a chippy named Karen Voss, and a racketeer named Miguel Lerner. The last two, although genuine cardboard, are only ostensibly a chippy and a racketeer; in actuality they are agents of a galactic civilization, undergoing a toughening period on Earth to fit them for executive jobs elsewhere, and at the same time keeping our planet knee-deep in blood in order to breed more recruits as tough as themselves.

This is one of the good ideas referred to above. The word is used in its technical sense; I find this one unpalatable, and I think it contains a fallacy a yard wide—but it is a good fictional idea, and after marling time for just over half the book, MacDonald makes effective use of it.

The other concerns the background against which the first part of the action takes place: after a third World War which has smashed the Soviet Union and pauperized the U. S., a new democracy called Pak-India has emerged to sweep the remnants of both into its orbit. This is good medicine for a group of writers who, as de Camp has pointed out, too often make "the bland assumption...that the galactic culture of the future will be an exclusively Anglo-Saxon affair." It also makes for high comedy, as threadbare New York crowds resentfully watch the Pak-Indian tourists cruising down the streets in their glittering Tajos or Bramaha. Unluckily, this part of the story ends circa p. 6.

The style is that first-reader moronism which yawns constantly beneath the heels of Murray Leinster, who is too nimble a gentleman ever quite to fall into it. For a sample, as well as for an indication of the grade of cellulose used in the characters, see the following:

"This week humanity muffed the ball again. It was an infield error. The shadows stretch long across the diamond. The long game is drawing to a close. Death is on the mound. He threw one that President Enfield got a piece of. Enfield's hit put Darwin Branson on third. He had a chance to come home. He ran nicely most of the way to the plate, and then faltered. They put the tag on him. 'Yerrout!' yelled the celestial umpire."

This is Dale Lorin turning out copy for a denunciation of his former boss (killed and replaced with a golem by the galactic agents) which Lorin—and, we must presume, MacDonald—thinks is hot stuff. Judging by the sloppy and unjournalistic example we are given, which runs for another paragraph but never gets near its subject, it would have had all the shattering effect of a paper bag full of water dropped in the middle of Lake Michigan.

We are unable to discover how long Lorin can keep this up, because at this point our galactic friends begin annoying him with hallucinations of a kind familiar to those who have read Henry Kuttner's "The Fairy Chessmen." Lorin's reaction is totally incredible. Unlike Kuttner's hero, who knows damned well that he is being persecuted, Lorin shrugs off bloody faces on his typewriter keys, red-hot pencils, and similar phenomena, as symptoms of mild strain.

A little later we meet Karen Voss, who has apparently got all her ideas about chippies from Hollywood, and learn that the galaxies are divided into two opposing groups whose members engage in frequent mental duels under the noses of the unsuspecting populace, rather like Lensmen and Boskonians sparring in Macy's window. I am sorry to say that if Miss Voss and her opponent in Chapter 5 are fair ex-

amples, there must be something radically wrong with the galaxies' recruiting procedures; any tertiary villain from a Mickey Spillane story could have clobbered either of them with ease.

I have neglected to say anything about Lorin's ex-girl friend, Patrice Togelson, "a tall, warmly-built Viking girl (who) had brought to Dale a deep, earthy, physical warmth"; also five and a half million dollars—the subject is almost too painful to mention, and she has absolutely nothing to do with the plot anyhow.

To resume, it now appears that Karen and Lerner are using Lorin as a catspaw in the unending struggle with their galactic opposite numbers—these latter are of course the baddies who tried to prevent Lorin from finishing his expose (not, however, by anything so straightforward as shooting him between the eyes, since this, *a*, would have been vulgar, and *b*, would have worked), and it follows that the goodies want him to finish it. He does so, getting no measurable distance nearer a Pulitzer Prize.

"...He used the same lead, tightening it a bit, altering it to include the death of Branson."

—By having a pitched ball conk him on the head, I presume.

Later on, when MacDonald's skein of transparent mystery, action for action's sake, and flatulent conversation has unwound itself sufficiently, we are introduced to the inner level on which the real action of the story is taking place, and matters improve considerably. Just before Lorin is recruited by Karen and Lerner, the baddies try for him again, this time more sensibly, by a pseudohypnotic compulsion designed to make him jump out a hotel window; and the nightmare of a man possessed, aware only in intervalles snatches as he's forced to kill himself, is pretty unnerving.

Chapters 10 and 11, devoted to Lorin's training on an unnamed planet, are the most effective in the book; still later, when Lorin returns to Earth, there are well-conceived and written passages intermixed with much dreariness as Lorin struggles against, and finally accepts, the galactic system. The notion of Earth as a breeding-ground for galactic leaders is developed and apologized for in detail; this argument, which I had perhaps better leave unexpounded for the benefit of anyone who may want to read it for himself, seems to me to rest on half a dozen unspoken assumptions—each unlikelyer than the next; but these concluding chapters are better than the first half of the book by several orders of magnitude, and some may feel that they make up fully for the cliches, the loose ends, and the meat-grinder writing of the first 25,000 words; I don't.

—Damon Knight

[Turn To Page 56]

There was only one place for Al Rogers in the 23d Century—a place they admitted that they themselves considered repugnant...

THE SQUARE PEG

by Stephen Arr

(illustrated by Ed Emsch)



LAMMING his fist into the palm of his hand, the director burst out. "Why don't we stop this perpetual testing and do away with him—as they would have done in his own time?"

The man from the Twentieth Century looked up from the machine and grinned insolently with this mouth, but his blue-grey eyes were cold as they watched the others' reactions.

The Chief of Personnel stiffened in a shocked manner, every inch of his small frame protesting.

The girl who was his assistant laughed. "Merely a verbal expression of exasperation," she diagnosed. "It's better to get those things out than to let them prey on your subconscious," she added approvingly.

"Of course," the Chief of Personnel agreed, relieved.

The Director didn't say anything.

"Now Mr. Rogers," the Chief of Personnel said, turning to the man from the Twentieth Century, "We would like to try another test of your learning-capacity. Lights on the board of the machine will flash in a certain sequence. As each flashes, push the button under the light. After the series is finished, try and push the buttons in the same sequence without the lights. We will repeat this process until the sequence is correct. Get set Miss

Smyth. Are you ready, Mr. Rogers?"

"No," Al Rogers snapped.

The Director's heavy face reddened; he turned and walked silently out of the room.

"But Mr. Rogers," the Chief of Personnel said in the patient voice of a reasonable man repeating something that he has said many times before, "how do you expect us to find a place for you in the social-structure of the twenty-third century if you won't co-operate. It's for your own good. We have a very smoothly-integrated system, and it won't be easy to place you."

"Why not kill me then?" the man from the Twentieth Century demanded harshly, looking more anachronistic than ever. He was tall and lean, with ice-blue eyes, a large hooked nose, and a strong chin. His expression was that of a bellicose eagle. They had made clothing for him that was a copy of the 20th Century apparel in which he arrived.

"Mr. Rogers," the Chief of Personnel rebuked gently. "Mankind has changed since your time. We do not kill; we do not even lose our tempers. We are all very well-adjusted people. Of the world's entire population, probably only the Director would have given vent to that most unusual—but somewhat understandable—fit of exasperation you witnessed. You see, the World Director is chosen and trained especially for his qualities of drive, impatience, and demand for perfection.



Al pulled the door of the copter open savagely, and pushed Glori inside, as several doctors came running toward them.

Obviously he must be somewhat mal-adjusted."

"A smug, degenerate little world of contented cattle led by the nuttiest." Al Rogers laughed "But what if you can't fit me into it? What then?" He rose to his feet and stretched muscles cramped from sitting at the machine. His face looked angry, but his eyes were still cold and watchful.

"I don't know," the Chief of Personnel replied uncertainly. "If you were younger, we could mould your personality-traits for what you are best fitted—as we do with our young; but I'm afraid you're too old for that now. After all, we've never had a problem like this before. What will be done with you if we can't recommend a

place for you is a policy decision for higher authorities."

"For the Director," Al snorted cynically. "I have a vague feeling that he isn't too fond of me."

The girl laughed, but Al did not turn to look at her. He already knew that she had brown hair, large black eyes that studied him as impersonally as they would an amoeba under a microscope, and a slim, athletic body that still was definitely feminine. She was the only woman that he had seen daily during the three months of his captivity in the Twenty-Third Century, and at night he dreamed of smashing the calm look of detachment on her perfect features. During the day he tried not to look at her.

"Of course he doesn't like you," Glori Smyth agreed with amusement in her voice.

"Mr. Rogers," the Chief of Personnel pleaded, running a hand over his almost-bald head, "Won't you cooperate with us? If examination of your time-machine, wrecked as it was from the stress of passing the time-barrier, had not proved it, our own tests have convinced us that you are a genius. But a terribly maladjusted genius, and we have decided that you would be a disruptive factor working on an assigned project with other scientists. Nor would it be safe for us to let you work alone, since you undoubtedly would carry on your own secret projects as you did in your time. Yet we must find a solution, a place for you in the Twenty-Third Century. If you would only help," he ended, gesturing helplessly with his hands.

AL ROGERS didn't reply. He turned and walked to the window of his little room; they had put him in a hospital for convenience. Outside, the sun shone from a cloudless blue sky on a carpet of young spring-green grass that ran as far as eye could see, broken here and there by clumps of towering trees. An occasional dot of color showed where a house blended perfectly into the contours of the rolling hills. There were many more houses that could not be seen by the casual eye. This was the city, and its population was great. This was the city that Al had never seen, except from the window of his hospital room—or, more accurately, his cell. This was the world that they told him was without war, crime, insanity. He neither believed nor disbelieved it. He would have to see for himself.

Al reached down and casually picked up a heavy metal drafting-ruler from the drawing board by his bed, where he spent his spare time sketching machines that never would be built. He

tapped his knee with it idly several times. The feel of its weight was good in his hands. He turned suddenly.

"Degenerate," he said harshly, slapping the ruler against his right leg for emphasis. "Smug, fat, comfortable and degenerate. Three hundred years ago I conquered time, and you haven't rediscovered the secret yet. Two hundred years ago man reached the moon; but the planets, Mars, Venus, not yet. Never.

"Nothing stays still. Life is dynamic; if you don't move up, you start moving down. Your whole society, perfect as it may seem, is on the way down—and you haven't even the sense to know it. And I came to the future to find the answers to problems of space and time." He laughed bitterly.

"No one asked you to come," the girl said calmly. "You were even maladjusted in your own time, and you had to come to escape. You left in secret and you, above all, knew that there is no going backwards in time, only forward.

"Has it ever occurred to you," she continued, "that we might not enjoy spending all our time worrying about what to do with one maladjusted semi-savage, however brilliant he might be?"

"Then why not turn me loose?" Rogers demanded angrily. "I'll get along. When you first put me in this room, you said that it was for a brief period of testing. It's been three months now; I'm fed up."

The Chief of Personnel shook his balding head stubbornly. "We've got to finish our tests." He paused, then continued with sudden decision in a different tone, "As a matter of fact, I think we've found a place for you, but I don't want to tell you about it until we're sure. Now if you'll sit down at the machine and cooperate, we may be finished in a few days."

"What is it, dog-catcher?" Al demanded bitterly, his mouth set in a

thin line. "I'm sorry if I seem unco-operative, but I'm going out; I'm going to study your great culture first-hand for a while. I have no intention of sitting here until your Director quietly sends me to a gas-chamber."

Rogers started to walk slowly towards the open door.

"You are not permitted to go out," the little Chief of Personnel said firmly, stepping into his path.

"I'm twice as big as you," Al said softly, looking down at the little man in his path. "I am carrying a heavy metal ruler—primitive, but effective as a weapon. As far as I know, weapons are no longer used in your crime-free World State; just how are you going to stop me from walking out of that door?"

The psychologist's eyes flared open in surprise. "But, but," he stutted, "that's anti-social. That sort of thing just isn't done."

Al reached down with a large hand and firmly pushed the Chief of Personnel out of his way. The Chief's legs twisted as he reeled backwards; he tripped, his head hitting a corner of the machine as he fell. His body hit the floor heavily and he lay still.

Al swore.

"You savage," Glori gasped involuntarily, her face drained of color.

Al bent over the small psychologist. The man was unconscious, but breathing evenly and strongly.

Rogers straightened up. "Let's go," he said, striking his left palm with the heavy ruler.

"What?" Glori breathed, her black eyes wide, her breasts rising and falling quickly.

"Don't worry," Al said, laughing bitterly, "We savages are practical. I need a guide to help me out of the city, and that's all I need you for. If you help, nothing will happen to you. If you don't, I'll batter your pretty head with this ruler."

"You wouldn't," Glori gasped incredulously.

"Wouldn't I," Rogers said, stepping towards her, his face hard. "Remember, I'm a savage from a strange and violent age; I am a cornered savage, a cornered animal, against your world. Miss Smyth, a cornered animal should not be trifled with."

Her black eyes scanned his set face, his cold blue eyes, the heavy ruler swinging in his large right hand, and a look of contempt crossed her face. Turning to the door, her head held high, her slim body straight, she led the way into the hall. She turned right, and with Al following closely walked down a soundproofed corridor.

"Is your autococtor on the roof," Rogers demanded harshly.

"Yes," she replied, without turning around.

"Let's go to it," he ordered.

She shrugged and continued down the hall:

THEY PASSED several doors, some open some closed. Most of the rooms were empty of patients. A young doctor and a nurse came towards them down the hall. Al Rogers gripped the steel ruler firmly and his body tensed.

The doctor and nurse did not seem surprised to see him out. They smiled, nodded a friendly greeting, then passed. Al breathed a sigh of relief.

Glori turned abruptly. "Oh Dr. Bronk," she called.

Al twisted his body, pushed his back against the wall, and watched with narrowed eyes.

The doctor turned. "Yes Miss Smyth?" he asked in surprise.

"The Chief of Personnel is in Mr. Rogers' room. He told me to ask a doctor to stop by urgently; he wasn't feeling very well."

"Why yes," the Doctor answered puzzled, "Of course I'll stop in right

away. But why didn't he video the desk?"

Al measured the distance with his eyes. The Doctor was a good ten feet away, the nurse still further down the hall. Could he knock out Glori, finish off the Doctor, and still get down to the nurse before she could give the alarm? No, he couldn't do it; besides, he didn't want to hurt the girl. He would run for it if she gave him away.

Glori shrugged. "I don't know," she said, "ask him."

The Doctor turned abruptly, without saying anything more, and hurried down the corridor.

"You shouldn't have done that; there'll be an alarm in a minute," Al said, his mouth taut.

"What did you expect me to do," she asked, raising her head defiantly, "leave him there on the floor, perhaps to die?"

Rogers frowned. "He was all right," he growled. "Get me on the roof, and fast."

They walked quickly down the corridor, up two flights of moving stairs, and out on to the roof. Several copters were parked there.

"Which one do you prefer?" Al asked ironically.

"My own," Glori answered, walking over to a small cabin machine.

A hubbub suddenly broke out behind them, as several doctors spouted out of the entrance to the roof and streamed towards them. Al reached out and pulled the door of the copter open savagely, roughly pushed Glori inside, jumped in himself, and slammed the door shut.

"Start it," he barked at Glori.

She didn't move. Rogers could see Dr. Bronk, his face pale, panting heavily as he led the pack. Al glanced quickly at the controls. They were totally unfamiliar to him.

"Start it," he snarled at Glori, drawing back the heavy ruler, his face distorted with anger.

Glori's face turned white, but she

didn't move. The mask of anger fell from his face as his bluff failed. Al cursed and dropped the ruler. Dr. Bronk had already reached the copter, and was tugging at the door. Al reached in front of Glori and turned the switch, pushed the two buttons, and pulled out the lever on the control-panel. The vanes started to spin slowly, and the copter careened wildly sideways, bouncing along the roof. Dr. Bronk let go of the door, and the others in the path of the uncontrolled ship scattered. The copter danced erratically to the edge of the roof, tottered there.

Glori screamed and reached for the switch; Rogers grabbed her hand and held it. She struggled wildly as the copter slowly tipped over the side of the roof. Suddenly the ground was rushing up towards them.

Al released her hand, and Glori reached forward, grasped the lever, furiously pulled it out still further, and turned it sideways. The copter righted itself, their downward momentum slackened, stopped; they started upwards.

"So that's the flight-control," Al said. "Al, right, move aside; I'll take over now."

GLORI SLID over to the side without a word, and Al Rogers pushed the lever forward experimentally; the copter darted forward over the ground. He pulled it out further, and they gained altitude. He glanced behind him, to see several copters rising from the roof to follow them. He glanced at his watch. It was almost six, in another half hour it would be dark. If he wasn't caught by that time, and if they didn't have any sort of tracking-mechanism, he should be able to shake them. Al pushed the lever as far forward as it would go, and they streaked over the rolling hills.

He noticed a small video by the control-panel, and he switched it on to the news-channel. Almost immediately, the

heavy square face of the Director filled the screen.

"...nor can we underestimate the intelligence of the fugitive. He is desperate, savage, and dangerous. Inform your local Director immediately if you have any information as to his whereabouts. Do not, do not under any circumstances, try to reason with him or hold him yourself. He has attacked the Chief of Personnel and kidnapped a female personnel assistant. Your local Director has received instructions as to what to do and how to do it.

"However there is no cause for panic in the cities. It is believed that the fugitive is headed for The Preserve. Once again, I must caution you—report to your local Director; he has instructions for dealing with the savage."

Al snapped the set off. "Progress," he grunted. "We were good at legal lynchings three hundred years ago too." He turned to Glori. "What and where is the Preserve?"

"Why didn't you hit me before, on the roof?" she countered, her black eyes searching his face.

"I told you, we savages are practical. You would have been of no use to me unconscious," he replied. "Now, where and what is The Preserve, and why should I be headed there?"

"The Preserve," she said, "is a vast area given over to wild life. Man is not permitted in it to hunt or camp. They probably think that you are going there because you are headed straight for it, and because it would be a logical place to hide. It starts about three hundred miles dead ahead, just beyond that mountain-chain."

Rogers looked behind him. The pursuing ships were closer, but the sun was already sinking behind the chain of rugged peaks in front of them. If these people were as peaceable as claimed, they probably didn't have radar or guns on their copters.

Even as Al watched, the pursuing ships slowed, hovered, then swung

around and turned back. They had given him up. He was not surprised. From the beginning, he had noticed a weakness, a lethargy, a lack of drive in the whole culture. They had been born with the problems of food, wars, and politics solved for them; they no longer felt the urgency of finding new fields to conquer, of mastering space or time.

"Degenerate," Al muttered, shaking his head.

He turned to Glori. "Don't worry," he said to her kindly, "I'll put the copter down somewhere in the Preserve, get off, and you can drive it back to safety yourself."

She turned her face towards him and her black eyes studied him impersonally, as they had for months in the hospital.

AL ROGERS turned quickly away and concentrated on the controls. The sun had already dropped beneath the horizon, and twilight was fast giving way to darkness. He gained altitude until he was sure that he would be able to clear the mountains, then he reached into the pocket under the control-panel and pulled out the maps that he knew must be there. He searched through the unfamiliar names of towns and rivers until he came across the large green area marked as "The Preserve." On its eastern edge was a chain of mountains corresponding to those in front of them. Glori had not lied.

A bare sliver of a crescent moon had risen, touching the landscape with feeble light, when they finally were over the mountains and into the Preserve. The maps showed that there was a level, wooded plain below them. Al pushed the lever in and they slowly descended. In the dim moonlight, he aimed for a small opening in the trees. Too late, he saw that the wind was making him drift more than he had expected.

"Watch out," Glori suddenly screamed.

There was a splintering sound as one of the blades hit a tree and snapped off. The copter lurched sideways sickeningly, hit the ground with another tearing of blades. Al's head smashed into the plastic windshield; his shoulder hit the control-lever and snapped it. A blast of pain from the shoulder swept through his brain, momentarily wiping out all thought; then his mind cleared. "Glori," he shouted, "Glori, are you all right."

She lay limp as a rag doll over the splintered wreckage of the control-panel. He stood up unsteadily, slipped his arms under her, oblivious of the pain in his right shoulder; picking her up, he carried her out of the wrecked copter and laid her slim body down gently on the grassy surface of the clearing.

Rogers felt her pulse; it was strong. He knelt down beside her and bending over loosened the collar around her neck so that she could breathe more easily. His head was close to her, and bending slowly he kissed her lips. He realized suddenly that her black eyes were open, studying him.

He stood up abruptly.

"You're bleeding badly," she said, sitting up.

He looked at his shoulder surprised. Bright red arterial blood was bubbling from a gash in his shoulder, running down his arm, dripping off of his hand into the hungry soil.

Then he heard the copters, many of them, landing close by. He should have known that they would track him. He walked slowly back to the wreckage of the ship and picked up the heavy steel ruler with his good left hand. He chuckled to himself. *My drafting ruler, he thought, my weapon for peace or war.*

He stood by the copter, waiting.

GLORI CAME towards him.
"Get back," he snarled.

She stopped, as men came from the woods. Many men, armed with wooden clubs, ropes, and metal bars.

"Come back quietly," Glori said, her voice emotionless. "You don't understand. We are your friends; we will treat you well."

"Go back for what?" Al Rogers spat. "To be poked at and prodded, to be tested and retested, to be told where to go and what to do?"

"I'm not like you," he screamed at them. "I'm an animal, the male animal of the twentieth century. Pushed, driven, kicked, but never beaten except by death. Reaching confusedly, bumbling, often mistaken, but still grasping for the stars. You can't set me down like a peaceful cow in your green pastures to feed on the grass sown by past generations, by my generation. Don't ask me to live your way, I can't; let me die in mine."

The circling men pushed forward, crude clubs raised, flowing around and past Glori, who stood immobile as a statue.

"Come on," Al shouted, swinging his ruler with his good left hand. "Come on, you creeps; let's see how many of you will go down with me."

The tightening circle hesitated, stopped. The men looked at each other and each waited for his neighbor to move.

Al Rogers laughed harshly; the scene darkened and shimmered unreal-ly before his eyes. A wave of weakness made his knees quiver; he realized that he was rapidly weakening from loss of blood.

"*A moi,*" he shouted wildly to the shimmering trees, and with his last strength he charged the ring. He saw the horrified white face of the first man to go down before his weapon. Someone dropped on to the ground in front of him and grabbed his leg to bring him down. Al brought his knee up hard into the man's face, and watched him as he looped over back-

wards, falling limp as a sack of wheat. Strong hands wrestled with him for possession of the steel ruler. Two hands, then four hands, then six hands. Al Rogers let go of it, pumped a fist into the face of the man in front of him, stepped over him and caught the next with a knee to the groin. A club slashed down and hit his wounded shoulder, and an involuntary animal scream of pain tore from his throat; twisting his body, he brought a left hook into the face of the man who had hit him. He caught the man's face again with his knee as he went down, and all of a sudden he was through the circle, driving towards the trees, the footsteps of many men behind him.

Only one figure in front of him. Glori, her face white as chalk, her black eyes staring at him in horror, her hand in front of her face, her knuckles pushed tightly against her open mouth. Her face, a spot of white in the rushing darkness. Things clouded; Al forgot about the trees, about those behind him, about anything but that face floating in a pool of blackness. He tried to reach it, saw the black eyes widen, widen, then suddenly his knees refused to carry him any further.

"Glori," he cried, sliding to the ground at her feet; then something exploded on the back of his head and he was falling, falling, perpetually, into a deep well.

HE CAME out of the well slowly, in stages. First he was aware that his shoulder ached; then that his head ached; then that his body was criss-crossed with a myriad of minor pains. Later, he realized that he was on a bed. Finally he opened his eyes and saw the same small room, the same drawing board, the same people. He was not surprised.

"Well?" he challenged, sitting up with some difficulty, still weak. His gaze passed by Glori quickly, and he let his eyes single out those of the Chief of Personnel.

The small, mouselike, chief looked away nervously and refused to meet his gaze.

Al turned to the Director. The Director's heavy face was set in a grim, hard expression. Al almost thought he saw a bit of personal malevolence sparkling behind his small eyes.

"An amazing display, Mr. Rogers," the Director said coldly. "I did not have the privilege of being there myself, but the Chief and I have seen the films. An amazing exhibition of senseless savagery. Of primitive conflict for the sake of conflict.

Rogers shrugged. "What are you going to do now," he demanded. "Put your favorite solution into practice?"

"Let's be frank," the Director said, bending forward, "Of all the people on Earth, I probably am the most like you. As a matter of fact, I was hoping that you would manage to kill yourself. However, the powers of the Director are very limited by both common sense and by very strict unwritten rules. In this case, I must bow to the recommendations of the personnel section. Though they think I should tell you what they have decided, I won't; it's up to them."

Al raised his eyebrows in surprise and glanced at the Chief of Personnel. The Chief shifted uneasily in his chair, licked his lips, looked unhappy. "You understand," he said. "that we really had no other choice. We could not put you in a laboratory. You are an extreme individualist and would not work with the others. We could not let you work alone, because we know that you would not follow the Director's orders. Basically, Mr. Rogers, despite your great mind—or possibly because of it—you are an anarchist. You just cannot fit into an integrated society as a cog."

Al glanced quickly at Glori. She was looking past him, out of the window, her face calm.

"Just a minute," he said, interrupt-

ing the Chief. It suddenly was very important for him to know. "Have all the members of the Personnel section who studied my case concurred in your decision?"

The Chief looked momentarily confused.

Glori turned her face from the window quickly, and faced him, her glance impersonal. "Yes," she said clearly.

"Oh," Al said, his voice dead. He leaned back against the pillow. His shoulder hurt and his head swam from weakness.

The Chief of Personnel turned to the Director and said a bit irritably, "I think you should tell him."

Al cocked an eyebrow and looked up at the Director. A strange smile played around the heavy man's lips. "The honor," he said with thinly-veiled sarcasm, "is yours, as the decision was yours."

"Yes, but you're the Director," the Chief protested, his small, humourless face deadly earnest.

The Director shrugged and looked out of the window.

Al glanced at Glori. She was still watching him emotionlessly. *As though I were an amoeba on a slide, or a butterfly on a pin*, he thought bitterly.

THE CHIEF licked his lips. It was coming now. Despite himself, Al Rogers felt his muscles tense, his heart started to beat wildly. He realized that, bitter as he might feel towards life at that moment, he would not go down without a fight.

"We have decided," the Chief said, "to train you to be the next Director. Of course I realize how repugnant the position is to any balanced person of our time, but I think you might be suited for it."

He held his hands out palms up apologetically, "Really, there's no other place where we can put you."

"What," Al choked, sitting bolt upright.

[Turn To Page 80]



A Powerful Novelet of Man's Destiny

by Poul Anderson

THE CHAPTER ENDS

*plus outstanding short stories and
features, which include*

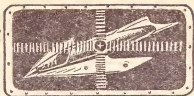
DESIRE NO MORE Algis Budrys
Isherwood was determined to be the first rocket pilot . . .

THE PLOT-FORMS OF SCIENCE FICTION #2 ... James Gunn
Continuing a thorough survey of science-fiction, as she is written.

THE UNWILLING PROFESSOR Arthur Porges
He had come prepared, but not for anything like this!

Look for the
January issue of

DYNAMIC SCIENCE FICTION



INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

WHEN PHILADELPHIA, and the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, surprisingly were awarded the 11th World Science Fiction Convention there were many who doubted that this city, and this group, were capable of administering an affair of the stature and calibre of the 1952 Chicago shindig. Now that the 11th World S-F Convention has come and gone, many of the former critics have admitted that the PSFS masterminded a great affair.

We're not attempting to maintain that it topped Chicago's 1952 gala event—it didn't, but there is no doubt that it came close to equalling it. Instead of the 1,000 attendees expected, only about 800 were on hand. The price of the banquet (\$5.75) was, admittedly, too high. Also, Philcon II did not hold its sessions in a night-club (a la Chicago)—but the Grand Ballroom of the Bellevue Stratford Hotel served as very adequate quarters. In reality, it turned out to be the second-best convention of the entire eleven. And that, to us, spells success.

A huge throng was on hand Friday evening to start the festivities rolling a little early. The evening before the convention is customarily one of the bright spots of the affair. Everyone is eager and enthusiastic. Their smiling faces have not yet acquired that pallid, bleary-eyed appearance which automatically accrues after several days and nights of intensive conventionneering.

Entering convention headquarters, one immediately observed Mr. and Mrs. Forry Ackerman discussing British science fiction with H. J. Campbell, editor of England's *Authentic Science Fiction*. Nearby were E. E. Evans, E. E. Smith, Ph. D., and Lloyd Eshbach busily talking over

forthcoming Fantasy Press releases. Bob Tucker and Bob Bloch (fantasy humorists supreme) were the center of attention of many starry-eyed young fen. L. Sprague de Camp, along with other PSFS members, was engaged with the task of registering the early arrivals. Milton A. Rothman, Convention Chairman, could be heard muttering in his beard, "Never again." (Milt, incidentally, had already acquired that pallid, bleary-eyed appearance, mentioned above.) Others readily observed were Lester del Rey, Frank M. Robinson, Jerry Bixby, Erle Korschak and Ted Dikty (Shasta Publishers), and Philip Farmer.

The convention itself commenced promptly Saturday afternoon. Irvin Heyne introduced Milton Rothman, the permanent Chairman, who welcomed the large congregation of pro's and fen. After Sprague de Camp read the rules, and Bob Madle introduced the celebrities present, Willy Ley (Convention Guest of Honor) discoursed on the subject of "Energy." Other first-day highlights were an auction conducted by Sam Moskowitz and a meeting of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. And, something new!—The Convention Committee thoughtfully provided for an "Informal Gathering of All Convention Members" (to quote the program booklet). This "informal gathering" was, in reality, one large party in the Rose Garden, on the 18th floor of the hotel. This lasted until midnight at which time everyone was all aglow and happy. At this point some considered the day complete—others were merely gaining momentum. Needless to say, many were the gatherings held and the refreshments consumed from midnight until dawn.

SUNDAY morning's session (quite slimly attended—as are all morning ses-

sions) included talks by H. J. Campbell of England, Tetsu Yano from Japan, Irvin C. Heyne, and Phillip J. Farmer. The latter's talk, "SF and the Kinsey Report," was quite unusual—to say the least! Farmer, in addition to indicating that he was one of Kinsey's statistics, delved into a subject which isn't the ordinary Sunday morning, pre-breakfast fare.

The highlight of the afternoon was George O. Smith's "The Seven Stages of the SF Writer." Smith's speech (although quite lengthy) was a masterpiece of humor. If some fanzine (or prozine) hasn't already done so, we suggest that this speech be grabbed up for future publication. Smith was followed by a play, "The Game from Outer Space," presented by the host club, the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society. Written by Harold Lynch, this was a science fiction version of "What's My Line?" This bit of levity was handled quite well and the audience was receptive. Two panels completed the afternoon session: "Fans Who Have Become Pro's" and "Women in Science Fiction." These were ably moderated by Bob Tucker and Theodore Sturgeon, respectively.

The banquet was held Sunday evening with Isaac Asimov as Toastmaster. To be brief, Asimov was terrific! He kept his audience thoroughly amused throughout the entire banquet. In between Asimov's quips and jokes, the First Annual Science Fiction Awards were presented. Forry Ackerman, voted the year's top fan, turned his "Hugo" over to Ken Slater of England; Virgil Finlay was the fan's choice of all the interior artists and Ed Emsh and Hannes Bok were the winning cover artists; Willy Ley took top honors for fact articles, and Philip J. Farmer was voted the most sensational new s-f writer; *Galaxy* and *Astounding* shared top honors among the magazines and Alfred Bestor's "The Demolished Man" was voted the best novel of the year. We feel that the presentation of these awards (conceived of by Harold Lynch) should be an annual custom, and trust that future conventions will continue the tradition established at 1953 convention.

The banquet session continued with Theodore Sturgeon strumming his guitar and singing, among other things, "Thunder and Roses!" Judy May (last year's convention Chairman) charmingly sang several songs from a forthcoming play, "The Son of the Thing." Then followed the costume party, sponsored by the New York Science Fiction Circle, with Jean Carroll as Chairman and Frank Kelly Freas, Ric Binkley, and Ed Emsh doing the judging. Strange and unusual, indeed, were the creatures that paraded past the artist-judges. Incidentally, one of the first prize winners was Mrs. Richard Wilson, wife of the prominent writer of the same name.

The bidding for 1954's convention site was the final day's fare. Three cities

were nominated: Cleveland, San Francisco, and London. Surprisingly enough, London polled an appreciable number of votes and, we thought, it would be nice to have the world convention over there sometime. In 1954, however, it will be in the fabulous city of San Francisco. It is interesting to note that the group of old-time fans and pros who swung the 1953 convention from San Francisco to Philadelphia were instrumental in swinging 1954's affair from Cleveland (which was the red-hot bidder this time) to San Francisco.

The PSFS is to be congratulated on the fine, mature affair it sponsored. Milt Rothman, in particular, deserves commendation for taking over the Chairmanship upon the sudden and shocking death of the original Chairman, James A. Williams. Non-PSFS members David A. Kyle, Algis Budrys, and Joe Gibson deserve paeans of praise for the work they accomplished. And, extremely important, all fandom expresses gratitude to the prozine publicity given the convention. Special thanks go to Lester del Rey, Bill Hamling, Robert W. Lowndes, and Raymond A. Palmer.

The 11th World Science Fiction Convention is now history. The s-f world now looks westward—to San Francisco—to 1954 and the 12th World Science Fiction Convention.

THE FANZINES

THE PUBLICATIONS of active fandom have been arriving at our mailbox with increasing regularity of late—and we certainly do appreciate reading them. Some are printed; some are multilithed; others are run off on the mimeograph; and there are several which utilize the hektograph for reproduction. Regardless of how they are produced, whether they are large or small—they usually have something interesting to say. We feel certain that many of the readers of *Future Science Fiction* would not be going amiss if they were to sample several of the fanzines discussed below.

The latest issue of *ASFO* (15¢ from Jerry Burge, 415 Pavillion Street, S.E., Atlanta, Georgia) is an example of a well-balanced fan-mag. It sports an excellent photo-offset cover illustration (drawn by the magazine's versatile editor, Burge), and some good mimeography. Cal Beck's news-column, "Nods and Becks," is enjoyable: Beck divulges a lot of "behind the scenes" information concerning the various s-f magazines and editors. William Batterson's "Thoughts on Fantasy" advises science fiction writers to pattern their styles after the more successful of the general fiction writers. Fred Chappell and Russell K. Watkins round out the issue with above average material.

An extremely well-edited and neatly-mimeographed publication is *SF* (\$1 for eight issues from John L. Magnus, Jr., 9312 Second Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland). The last number contains fifty pages

of highly interesting material. Harlan Ellison (who has just sold his first story to the *Magazine of F&SF*) deprecates the introduction of Mickey Spillane to science fiction; there is a short biography of Poul Anderson, and some very funny poetry. Most nonfans will enjoy the various columns featured in each issue of *SF*. Bob Silverberg writes "The First Issue" which describes, in detail, one professional magazine per issue. This time *Future* is Bob's topic. S-F collectors will enjoy Paul Mittelbuscher's "Via the Time Warp" which resurrects gems from the readers' departments of years ago. *SF*, we assure you, is well-worth the asking price.

Eclipse (10¢ from Ray Thompson, 410 South 4th Street, Norfolk, Nebraska) offers 32 large hektographed pages of general fan material. Joel Nydahl's regular column, "Inertia," discusses things scientific and is always interesting. In our opinion Joel Nydahl is one of the outstanding fan personalities of today. He edits and publishes one of the best of the fanzines, *Vega*; he writes excellent material for other fanzines; and he has had a story published professionally ("Lesson for Today" in *Imagination*). And he just turned fifteen! Another informative department is that written by Bobby Stewart, and Daryl Sharp tells "The Story of the Atom." A little more care in reproduction, and improved artwork, would push *Eclipse* closer to the top.

A magazine which has shown a great deal of improvement of late is *A La Space* (15¢ from Kent Corey, Box 64, Enid, Oklahoma). This multi-lithed zine has a personality all its own, and we enjoy it thoroughly. In the issue we have on hand Larry Balint writes informatively on "3d and SF" and lists a number of scientific films soon to appear. Carol McKinney presents the results of her "Preferred STF Magazines" poll, and there are several other items of average interest.

A very attractive little photo-offset entry is *The Space-Warper* (10¢ from Charles Nuetzel, 15452 Moorpark Street, Encine, California). The current issue features Forrest J. Ackerman with an article on the recent 6th Annual Westerncon. Future issues, Editor Nuetzel informs us, will contain material by Ross Rocklynne, Joe Gibson, Dr. R. C. Richardson, F. L. Wallace, Ray Bradbury, Chad Oliver, and David H. Keller. Quite a lineup.

Vega is a fanzine we suggest you try—it is really "Fandom's leading monthly." Always perfectly mimeographed, well illustrated, and well-worth the dime asked per copy. (Joel Nydahl edits this one at 119 South Front Street, Marquette, Michigan.) Harlan Ellison is always interesting with his regular department, "Birdbath to Bulbofagg" and Dean Grennell, one of fandom's top writers, is ever-present with his "The Murky Way," a column of general information. Also, this time, Bob Tucker's

"State of the Union" discusses some interesting aspects of past s-f conventions. Robert Bloch and Don Cantin round out an excellent issue.

When sending fanmags for review please address them to: Robert A. Madle, 1825 Academy Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.

TWENTY YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION

LAST TIME we discussed the January issues of the three s-f magazines of 1934 and indicated the great improvement displayed by all over the 1933 issues. All sported the famous NRA blue eagle on their covers, and it appeared that science fiction was continuing to parallel the economic cycle in that, like the nation, it was recovering from its most severe depression.

Astounding Stories for February offered one of Howard V. Brown's best cover paintings—an interplanetary scene illustrating Earl Vincent's all-but-forgotten novella, "Lost City of Mars." This was fair space-fare, and also just mediocre was "The Living Flame," by Arthur Leo Zagat—which was one of those yarns about immortals living beneath the earth. This time Nova Scotia was the setting, and the ancient Norse was the race. There were also several shorts by Raymond Z. Gallun, Amelia Reynolds Long, and others. Miss Long's entry, "Scandal in the Fourth Dimension," was a humorous tale of invisibility which appealed to the 1934 connoisseurs.

The big story, however, was the first installment of Thomas Calvert McClary's classic novel of the reconstruction of Man and civilization, "Rebirth." Like many writers of the early thirties, McClary looked on the state of affairs—and found it wanting. "Rebirth" was his expression of discontent. His hero, Goddard, after being scorned by the lawmakers of 1957 for his radical appeal for the abolishment of war, poverty, and hatred, and for the utilization of science for the benefit of all, takes harsh measures. Goddard, the world's greatest scientist, wiped the minds of all men clean of memory. Suddenly everyone on earth forgot everything he knew. McClary then wove an exciting novel about this basic theme of memoryless man and how he regained his forgotten knowledge and built a brand new civilization.

To our knowledge, "Rebirth" has not appeared in hard cover format although it definitely deserves such resurrection and preservation. Bart House, in 1944, published a pocketbook version, and this possibly may still be obtainable. It was also reprinted on the October 1951 issue of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*.

Wonder Stories for February featured the ever-present Frank R. Paul with a fair cover illustrating a scene showing a battle of "tripod-cars," from Eando Binder's novella, "The Spore Doom." This was a tale

of intrigue in the underground-cities of the 21st century. The war of 1975 had seen the creation of a fungus which absorbed oxygen from the air and compelled Man to create underground cities—or disappear from the earth!

Abner J. Gelula's "Vengeance of a Scientist" was a well-written novelet of the discovery of invisibility, and how it was used by a "framed" scientist to gain retribution. "Farrington" was the name of the avenging scientist and of the story as submitted; young Charles Hornig thought his prosaic title an improvement.

"The Sublime Vigil," Chester D. Cuthbert's beautiful and pathetic tale of a woman swept from a mountain-top by some unexplainable cosmic force, also appeared in this issue. Cuthbert's portrayal of the lover forever standing vigil at the site of the disappearance awaiting either the return of his sweetheart, or the descent of the cosmic vacuum upon himself, makes marvelous reading. Knute Savary, "The Exile of the Skies," continued on his adventuresome way, and Benson Herbert and J. Harvey Haggard rounded out the issue with fair shorts. Frank R. Paul and Lumen Winter penned the interior illustrations.

Leo Morey's cover painting on the February, 1934 *Amazing Stories* depicted a scene from H. Haverstock Hill's four-part serial, "Terror Out of Space." Hill's effort

was a mediocre one, which told of the landing of a group of friendly Martians and the abducting of several Terrestrials. It also involved the planet Ados, located on the other side of Luna, which had designs on Mars and Earth. Needless to say, the Earth-Mars Allied Expeditionary Forces emerged victorious at the end of Part IV.

Dr. "Skylark" Smith continued the fabulous adventures of Conway Costigan, and the other progenitors of the "Lensman" series, in the second installment of "Triplanetary." Also represented was Phil Nowlan, the now-deceased author of "Buck Rogers," with "The Time Jumpers." The Norsemen (again!) are visited via the time-track. Nowlan threw in George Washington for good measure. Frankly, we don't think this story would compete with "The Demolished Man", were it published today. Winthrop W. Hawkins and Clifton B. Kruse had average short stories, and Jules Verne's "A Descent into the Maelstrom" was reprinted.

C. A. Brandt reviewed "Tarzan and the City of Gold" and Wells' "Shape of Things to Come," and P. Schuyler Miller discoursed at great length in "Discussions." As usual, Morey was the sole interior artist. *Amazing Stories* was lagging far behind its competitors, and there was speculation as to how much longer it could maintain monthly publication.



READIN' AND WRITHIN'

(continued from page 43)

THE UNDYING FIRE, by Fletcher Pratt. Ballantine Books, \$0.35 and \$2.00.

Number Three in Ballantine Books notable series of science fiction volumes in a rather workmanlike retelling of the story of the original Jason's search for the Golden Fleece, set in a future of somewhat conventional cast. Space Fleet men are all specially-conditioned to insure full cooperation while on missions; faster-than-light drives are standard, as apparently, are courtmartial, somewhat in the manner of Malcolm Jameson. There are also space-pirates on a scale formidable enough to require squadron-scale operations for successful action against them, and an underground, power-hungry conspiracy that attempts, with sinister cleverness, to use the conditioning-system of the Space Fleet for its own purposes.

When Captain Paulsson is discredited and courtmartialed through the machinations of the Reformer conspiracy, his best chance of regaining his position and good name requires a perilous interstellar passage through deep space to the remote

planet of Danaan. Reaching Danaan, Paulsson must wrest from the reluctant inhabitants the secret of a newly-developed neptunium engine for space ship propulsion, if he is to regain his rightful place in the succession to command in the Space Fleet. Otherwise, command of that all-powerful force seems certain to eventually fall into the hands of a man Paulsson and his loyal friends feel certain is a Reformer agent.

How Paulsson sets about accomplishing his dangerous and complex mission, in spite of his discredited position and the all-pervading opposition of the Reformer conspiracy, is the meat of the tale author Pratt has to tell. It would be a pleasure to report that the telling was an unqualified success, but your reviewer is forced to the observation that invention flags in spots, and certain inconsistencies detract from the plausibility that carries conviction for more sophisticated readers. Adequate, but not up to the usual high standard we have come to expect from both Ballantine and author Pratt.

—L. Jerome Stanton

SCIENCE FICTION ALMANAC

The dates listed are those that appeared on the magazines, rather than when they were on sale.

JANUARY

- 1930—*Astounding Stories of Super-Science* appears; pulp size. Harry Bates, editor.
- 1932—*Astounding Stories* returns to original title.
- 1938—John W. Campbell Jr., now editor of *Astounding*.
- 1939—*Startling Stories* appears; pulp size. Mort Weisinger, editor.
- 1942—*Astounding Science Fiction* now large size.
- 1949—*Super Science Stories* revived; pulp size. Elijer Jacobson, editor.
- 1951—*Famous Fantastic Mysteries* now semi-slick; small size, between pulp and pocket-book.

FEBRUARY

- 1931—*Astounding Stories of Super-Science* becomes *Astounding Stories*.
- 1939—*Dynamic Science Stories* appears; pulp size. Robert O. Erisman, editor.
- 1940—*Astonishing Stories* appears; pulp size. Frederik Pohl, editor.
- 1941—*Stirring Science Stories* appears; pulp size. Donald A. Wollheim, editor.

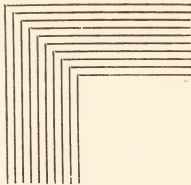
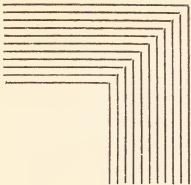
MARCH

- 1938—*Astounding Stories* becomes *Astounding Science Fiction*.
- 1939—*Science Fiction* appears; pulp size. Charles D. Hornig, editor.
- 1940—*Super Science Stories* appears; pulp size. Frederik Pohl, editor.
- 1941—*Cosmic Stories* appears; pulp size. Donald A. Wollheim, editor.
—*Super Science Stories* becomes *Super Science Novels*.
- 1943—*Famous Fantastic Mysteries* revived; pulp size. Mary Gnaedinger, editor.
- 1948—*Fantastic Novels* revived; pulp size. Mary Gnaedinger, editor.
- 1952—*If* appears; pocket size. Paul Fairman, editor.
- 1953—*Science Fiction Plus* appears; slick, large size. Hugo Gernsback, editor; Sam Moskowitz, managing editor.

WINTER

- 1928—*Amazing Stories Quarterly* appears; large size. Hugo Gernsback, editor.
- 1939—*Planet Stories* appears; pulp size. Malcolm Reiss, editor.





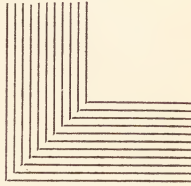
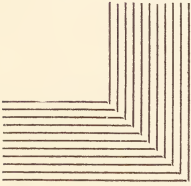
Without warning they appeared, this horde of playboys and playgirls, springing practical jokes that convulsed an anxiety-ridden world with laughter. And then the rule of happiness started . . .

WAMPUM

Novelet of Incredible Conquest

by **Sam Merwin Jr.**

(illustrated by Frank Kelly Freas)



THE LONG, low custom-built car had gone less than a half mile along the private road when it slowed gently to a stop. Its driver—his smart grey livery black in the night darkness, half-turned his

head toward the live cigarette-tip that indicated his employer on the rear seat. He said, "Sorry, sir—she seems to have gone dead. Could be the new distributor we got last week."

"Could be—but I doubt it." The

cigarette-tip wobbled with the words, then described a lateral arc as its owner removed it and added, "Just sit tight a moment, Wilson."

"Yes, sir," said Wilson. He sounded baffled. The two-hundred-mile trip, coming unexplained and without warning in the late afternoon, had cost him a crucial Saturday night date back in the city with a warily-lush young stenographer. Understandably he was in a mood for both bafflement and annoyance.

The voice came without warning out of the blackness around them. It said, with a faintly-metallic huskiness, "You may proceed. Welcome to Moot Point."

Wilson jumped, muttered, "Gawd!" Behind him, his employer chuckled softly behind his cigarette. The long low custom-built car proceeded smoothly on its way over the gently-curving road for another half-mile, when it was again halted by some outside control. This time both chauffeur and owner could make out the dim mass of a low cubist's dream of a house, utterly without lights.

Truscott Hoey, the owner, tamped out his cigarette and stepped onto the driveway to stretch his legs. Over his shoulder he said to Wilson, "Better stay with it a bit—and don't be surprised at anything that happens."

"Me—surprised?" countered the chauffeur sarcastically. Nonetheless he emitted a yelp of fright as his vehicle moved once more to go slowly around the side of the house.

Smiling, Truscott Hoey turned to walk through a brightly-lit rectangle of doorway that had appeared silently in the black wall. He removed homburg and topcoat, placed them on a pair of projections that had emerged from the wall to his right, and watched with amusement as projections and clothing vanished into the hall.

He left the hall through the only visible doorway, found himself in a long low-ceiled room, furnished with

bright rugs and comfortable-looking low chairs and sofas. Its entire outer wall was a picture-window of some transparent substance, apparently polarized for infra-red. Through it, almost as if by daylight, Hoey could see a broad sweep of pleasantly-landscaped grounds, leading down to a serpentine brook. He remembered crossing a brief bridge on the driveway, which he had at the time mistaken for a culvert.

He caught the reflection of a flicker of movement in the window, turned to see Vicky enter the room. She came to him, her red-gold hair glinting its myriad responses to the indirect light about them, gripped both his arms and gave him a firm fond kiss. Though she was a tall girl she had to stand on tip-toe to do it. Then, stepping back, she said, "Darling Tru, I had a premonition you'd be coming to see us."

He smiled and said, "I should have known. You always were a step ahead of me, Vicky." Then, after a brief pause, "Gawd, you're still a gorgeous gaggle of woman." He took her arm as if to lead her toward the door. "Come on, let's get out of here right now—before that heel Martinsen catches us—and shack up in Capri, or East St. Louis, or somewhere romantic."

Her laughter was soft and even more musical than his memories of it, a ripple of sheer amusement. She eyed him through an abatis of copper lashes and said, "I'd love to, darling—but I have another premonition that you didn't really come here to see me—you're here to see Raoul."

He sat down beside her on one of the low sofas, which was even more comfortable than it looked and said, "Dammit, Vicky, you're right, of course." Looking at her with a faint smoky curl of resentment, he thought that she was more beautiful than ever. The volatile dryad with whom he had romped scandalously and gaily through the cities, resorts and occasionally the

slums of two continents had acquired a layer of serenity, of fulfillment, that made her a warm and utterly human goddess.

TEN YEARS, he thought, ten years with Raoul had wrought this miraculous metamorphosis—and jealousy flickered within him as he wondered why it had been Raoul and not himself. Then he sighed and conceded silently that the rewards of genius are far higher—and rightly so—than those of ordinary men, no matter how talented. He had long since reconciled himself to the fact that what once he had felt sure was genius was no more than talent—and with the adjustment he had become a Very Important Person indeed.

Vicky, quick as always to sense the trend of his thoughts, took his near hand in hers and said gently, "I've been reading about it, of course—and hearing it over the vidarbox." She nodded slowly toward an immense concave screen that all but filled one of the end walls of that miracle room. "It's strange—almost like having the past brought back on a pantographic scale."

As usual, she had phrased it exactly. 'Pantographic'—he wished he had thought of it himself. He told her, "With a few new wrinkles added, of course. But that's about it."

For two years—during the time when Vicky was playing successfully the giddy and beautiful chinchilla cloak-model, and he had been playing with equal success the fabulously gifted young mural painter—they had delighted in making riotous mock of the society that supported them lavishly. At that time Raoul was merely a friend—and, to Tru Hoey, a rather odd former roommate, still grubbing obscurely for science degrees.

When, caught in a balcony aisle-jam in a New York movie theater, Tru's tallness had caused his head and shoulders to block off part of the

screen below, resulting in a chorus of boos. He and Vicky had returned the following night and released a box of moths—which had promptly beelined for the projector and forced the theater to close its doors until they could be caught.

On another occasion, with Vicky clad in denims and abetted by a quartet of blithe fellow-spirits, they had dug a trench across Fifty-second Street in the small hours, hung red lanterns on saw-horses and walked away without interference, leaving a puzzled city government faced with a minor repaving job the next day and traffic hopelessly snarled.

They had once sent anonymously to an alcoholic friend a dozen carboys of water, informing him falsely that one contained gin. Since he lived in a single hotel room the result had been complicated—and put him on the wagon for a whole month.

Practical jokes—sure. But conducted with originality, spirit and without injury to their targets. And when there had been injury it had been directed toward a butt who rated it.

It had been fun—and Tru had seen no reason for it to end—until Vicky had come to him one day and, with unaccustomed gravity, told him candidly about Raoul, still struggling to earn a living out of his earliest patents. Her key line had been, "Darling, of course I adore you—I always shall—but Raoul needs me. And you don't."

To that he had said, "You'll be back." And, when she had shaken her red-gold head and told him the decision was final, "Very well, little mother; I guess I'll have to join the Foreign Legion."

She had laughed and said, "Oh, Tru, you know you'll just go out and get drunk, wake up with a hangover to worry about, and forget about me."

It had made him so mad he had joined the Foreign Legion—and after three hard years of road-building in North Africa had lost not only his

playboy instincts but, with new depth and breadth of vision, new ambition to be of some use to society.

He had always been liked—and with increased seriousness he found himself trusted. He had a certain flair for handling people and more by chance than design, it seemed to him, had risen rapidly—first in public relations, then in labor relations, then in government. The very variety of his background and experience—result of happenstance rather than plan—had made him valuable. So he had become a Very Important Person—and a very lonely one.

NOW, ON THE sofa in the miracle-room of Raoul's house, she asked him, "Why come to Raoul, Tru—why Raoul?"

"Because," he told her quietly, "Raoul is the most intelligent person I know. And I'm frightened. There's something grotesque about recent developments—and I recall vaguely Conan Doyle having Sherlock Holmes say something about the close alliance between the grotesque and the horrible."

She studied him searchingly, then said, "Tru, you're frightened."

He nodded, told her, "I'm scared blue—and I'm damned if I know why. You'll understand better when I talk to Raoul."

"He'll be here any minute now," she informed him. "But, Tru, he's awfully bitter."

"I don't blame him—he got a rotten deal," said Tru Hoey, looking out the picture window but seeing nothing. Then, turning to Vicky tenderly, "Except in you, of course."

She laughed and patted his arm and stood up and Raoul Martinsen was in the room with them. He was still a medium-tall slouching homespun man, unexpectedly boyish, superficially a Mr. Deeds—or perhaps an Alger Hiss. Although he wasn't smoking a pipe, he looked as if he were smoking one. He

regarded Hoey somberly, only revealing warmth in the slight crinkling of the little wrinkles around his eyes, said, "Well, if it isn't our next President but three." Then, smiling as Hoey got to his feet, "What's the matter, pappy—want some advice in human relations? I can give it to you in four words—stay away from people."

Hoey pursed his elegant lips and made a most inelegant sound. He said, "Vicky and I were about to waft ourselves off on a flying carpet of romance. And then you have to come in and spoil everything."

"For shame!" said Raoul Martinsen, flopping into an armchair and reaching for a cigarette. Over the lighter flame he added, "All right, Tru, let's hear it. You didn't come all the way out here to cut up old touches."

"I only wish that were it," Tru told him. "You probably have a pretty good idea why I'm here. Vicky seems to have expected me." He glanced at the woman, who appeared to have retreated into a shell of exquisite silence while her men talked it out.

"We both have," Raoul replied, blowing smoke toward the ceiling. "You're not a fool; suppose you give us your version of the playboy invasion. All we know is what we see and hear on the vidarbox." He gestured toward the concave screen at the end of the room.

Tru Hoey gave it to him. "At first," he said, "I felt flattered that so many people should have decided to copy our—my old ideas of living. I poo-pooed the alarmists, who decried what looked like a trend toward popular irresponsibility."

"And now you're down to your last pooh," Raoul put in.

"Exactly," replied Tru. And as he gave details and places, his mind ranged back over the strange events of the past few months. It seemed incredible that so much could have happened in so short a time.

The world was still stretched bow-

string-tight by the tensions of the seemingly endless Cold War. Three months earlier, the cleavage that separated the planet's two factions had seemed as unbridgeable as ever. And then the playboys and playgirls had come.

2



THEY FIRST their exploits were ignored by all but gossip-columnists of the more sensational press. Then, as they kept up in virtually every large city throughout the land, they drew editorial scourging and rant-

ings from hundreds of Sunday pulpits.

And then somebody pointed out in a weekly newsmagazine that their pranks were reminiscent of those indulged in a decade before by Truscott Hoey, currently serving the government in a vital, if quasi-official capacity. Interviewed, Tru smiled and said, "Well, imitation *is* the sincerest form of flattery, isn't it?"—and let it go at that.

At that point, like many others, he was merely puzzled. For the jokes were not only harmless but, occasionally, beneficial—and with a curious consistency from Boston to San Francisco. When fireman raced to answer a false alarm they always found some sort of fire awaiting them, indicated by markers—in an oil lamp, a fire-place or perhaps a kitchen stove—usually accompanied by a case of filling for the cup that cheers.

When streets were dug up it was because they needed repair sadly, and people reporting stolen cars ceased to be surprised when they received newer and better models anonymously in return. Women whose outfits were damaged by water-bombs became blasé

about getting Lila Dache hats with outfits to match in return.

At this point, the epidemic was merely puzzling—even amusing to the authorities—despite its unaccountable extent. London, Paris, Buenos Aires, Calcutta reported similar epidemics. Always the perpetrators were charming young people who seemed to be equipped with plenty of cash to pay for their whimsies. According to authenticated reports, sifting through the Iron Curtain, like events were taking place in Prague, Moscow, Peiping and Karbharovsk with even more demoralizing results—though the fate of the perpetrators when caught remained a mystery to the West.

There was relaxation, a tendency to enjoy this unaccountable injection of gaiety into a world poised grimly on the lip of the deadliest of all wars. Led by the playboys and their companions, people who had not smiled in years unhooked their ulcers and began to have fun.

"Up to that point," Tru Hoey told Raoul and Vicky, "I was more than ready to go along with the gag. I thought it a fine thing."

"What caused you to change your mind, Tru?" asked Raoul, who had been listening, smiling occasionally at his former roommate's story-telling ability.

"A number of small things," said Tru. "The more the world began to laugh, the more disturbed I grew. Now I'm scared."

"Details," said Vicky imperiously. "Details, please."

He grinned at his former playmate, then sighed. It was hard to be serious with her around, although his feelings were anything but mirthful. Naturally there had been investigations—although it is never easy to investigate a single free-spender who comes out of nowhere, and makes him or herself generally liked—let alone several thousand. Only a few key figures could be checked—and in each instance the

searchers had come up against a blank wall.

And recently the jests had taken on a more serious note. Grafting politicians under probe were finding utterly-unsuspected fortunes in their safety-deposit boxes, fortunes they could not explain to themselves, much less to probers. Occasionally a dull program on television would be mysteriously abolished, in favor of a more entertaining show, or the screens of a few million listeners would go blank and a pleasant male or female voice would say, "This is too stupid to live. You'll do a lot better on channel twenty-two"—or some similar words.

Tru Hoey paused, then said, "I think this is what's scared me most. If these will-o-the-wisps can control television they can control a lot else, whenever they wish. And we know nothing about any of them." He looked at Raul, added, "When you called them 'invaders' you weren't by any chance implying a deeper knowledge?"

RAOUL MARTINSEN chuckled and shook his head. "I wish I were," he told Hoey. "I'd give a lot to know what's happening. The very idea of human beings suddenly becoming human has me groggy."

"You are a misanthropic s-o-b, aren't you?" countered Tru.

Raoul's handsome-homely face went dead serious. He said, "Tru, don't you think I have a right to be? Do you know that, outside of a few persons I've had to see professionally, and Vicky here, you're the first outsider I've talked to in five years?"

"You're a baaaard, man, Raoul," Hoey told him easily, wishing his one-time roommate had not retreated so completely into his shell of bitterness. Then, recalling Wilson, "By the way, I came here with a chauffeur; I hope he's all right."

"Don't worry, Tru," said Raoul Martinsen. He got up, added, "He's waiting for you now in the driveway."

With which, the most inventive genius of science the world had yet seen nodded and stalked out of the room.

Tru looked uncertainly at Vicky, who said, "Don't mind him, darling. He's been shut up away from people so long he's forgotten how to behave. It's been grand seeing you again, Tru."

Tru helped her up from the sofa, and she was still dancer-light on his arm. He began, "If you ever get fed up with..." Then, "No, that's foolish. If you ever did you would have come to me. And if you were ever going to you would have by now."

"I'm afraid so," she told him. They left the miracle-room and returned to the hall. Tru's coat and hat came out of the wall and he took them and put them on. She patted his sleeve and said, "Nice coat," and for a moment he wanted to kiss her again. But he knew he couldn't bear having to stop.

He said, "Vicky, I didn't come out here without being desperate—uncomplimentary as it sounds. Was Raoul telling the truth?"

"About what?" she asked him, her eyes wide and innocent.

He opened his mouth, then shut it, then said, "Never mind, darling. See you again—I hope."

"I hope so too," she told him, "but you'd better not wait ten more years."

He went out through the door that closed silently behind him, to Wilson and the long low custom-built car. As he got into the back he realised he had learned two things. One, thanks to Vicky's evasion, he knew Raoul had been lying; Raoul *did* know something of the personable young men and women who were disrupting the world in a wave of merriment. Two, her suggestion he not wait ten years before returning implied she and Raoul would not be much longer in their miracle-house on their miracle-estate—which meant Raoul had something big cooking.

Wilson got the car in gear and, after lighting a cigarette, Tru said, "How

was it with you—interesting?”

“Let me tell you about it, sir,” said the chauffeur in a voice thick with excitement. “When you stepped out, the car started to move and I...”

Tru Hoey listened but his thoughts were elsewhere as they rolled back toward the city through the night. He was thinking about the dark enigma that was Raoul Martinsen.

FROM THE time Vicky had made her decision to leave Tru for the inventor, nothing that Raoul touched seemed to go wrong. For awhile, as his inventions flooded the factories, stores and homes of the country and then the world, feature-writers liked to refer to him as a latter-day Edison. His successful patents ran quickly into three figures, in an incredibly short time into four.

While Tru Hoey was breaking rocks under a hot Algerian sun, his successful rival for Vicky's affections was reaping wealth that defied the estimates of his own accountants and those of the Bureau of Internal Revenue alike. By the time Tru, once more a civilian and out of uniform, was beginning his second career, Raoul was no longer mentioned in terms of the late Wizard of Menlo Park.

He had already gone beyond that. They were calling him an applied Einstein or, in some extreme instances, a Messiah of science, ready to lead humanity—or that portion of it that lived in the United States and Canada—into the Utopia offered so tantalizingly by the atomic age, so tantalizingly withdrawn.

When the government cut down on civilian metal for weapons Raoul gave them more powerful weapons that needed less steel. When the draft threatened to cut down manpower in the factories that put his inventions in useful form, Raoul came up with robotic devices that made manpower all but unnecessary.

It was this last that proved his pop-

ular undoing. During a lull in the Cold War, Raoul came out with his plan—nothing less than the freedom of humanity from compulsory labor by the substitution of electronic, mechanical and atomic robots for virtually every sort of toil, from farming and mining to the making of fine watches and the cutting of diamonds.

At first he was scoffed at as a genius who had crossed the borders of fantasy. Then, as intelligent folk began to realise he *could* deliver what he promised—that prototypes of most of his robots had been tested successfully and the others merely awaited the building—they turned on him.

The rich assailed him as a threat—not only to their dividends but to their power and privilege, the poor for amputating their wages. He was hooted, libeled, slandered, vilified as an Antichrist. For awhile he fought back; but at last, enraged at the stupidity of people who could not see the wealth he was offering them, he retired with Vicky to Moot Point, there to lick his wounds and ponder the imbecility of humanity behind a wall of invisible electronic protectors. Little by little he had been forgotten by the men and women who used his devices from dawn till dusk—and paid royalties on them—as people prefer to forget past unpleasantnesses.

Often, during recent years, Tru wished he could have helped his former roommate by giving of his own special talent, a knowledge and understanding of people. But by the time he had been in a position of sufficient influence, it was too late; Raoul had crawled into his own hole, taking Vicky with him, and defied the world to try to come to him.

More than ever, during the long night drive back to the city, Tru wished he could have stayed close to the genius. For it looked as if once again Raoul were running well ahead of the pack—and with his past experience to haunt him, it seemed unlike-

ly that he would be as generous toward his fellows. The lie about knowing nothing of the playboy invaders troubled Hoey—as did the use of the word, “invaders”.

NOR DID events of the next few days add to his peace of mind—rather they increased the fear gnawing within him. The playboy pace was stepping up—no, snowballing was the word. More important, for the first time, plenty of the pranksters had readily-identifiable records. Average citizens, what and wherever they were, were joining in the fun and games.

There was word of purges in Russia, Poland, Red China, Rumania and Czechoslovakia—purges that unaccountably failed when firing-squad rifles popped corks on strings instead of bullets; hangropes of rubber stretched comically without killing; guillotine blades of tin-foil crumpled harmlessly at contact with the necks of their victims.

In Birmingham, Alabama, when a tough-minded administration took drastic steps and put jokesters in jail, a laughing crowd of highly-placed citizens “stormed the Bastille” and put the civic leaders in stir after letting the fun-lovers out. In England “questions” in Parliament brought by the solemn minded were answered with spoonerisms, and bad puns in erudite Greek and Latin.

A Hollywood starlet, pinched for appearing at a public beach (Laguna) clad in a bathing suit that made the most daring postwar Bikini look like winter underwear, pressed a button concealed magically about her exposed person and squirted champagne from her navel into the arresting officer's face. The country howled and she was rewarded with a contract running into five figures per week.

In El Morocco, a playgirl famed throughout the hemisphere made her entrance wearing a raven on her bare shoulder—a raven which turned the

place into a bedlam by plucking the brightest and costliest jewels from the ears, necks and bosoms of the other ladies present. Later, she allowed her handsome escort to raffle them back to their owners for kisses.

“I wish I'd thought of that one ten years ago,” said Tru Hoey, grinning in spite of himself as he heard the story at breakfast over his television set. The pretty young sociologist momentarily sharing his apartment—and utterly lacking in humor or desire to play games—looked at him, her full lips parted in astonishment, and said nothing.

Tru sighed, said, “Never mind, beautiful. Just sit there and look like the Cleopatra you aren't. Believe it or not I have a hunch a much younger me was the prototype for this whole business.”

“I don't think that's a very funny joke, darling,” said the sociologist, whose name was Sally Jo—with an accent to match. “I declare, sometimes you're the hardest man to understand.”

Tru sighed, gave up, and placed his napkin on the table. He said, “Come to think of it I don't suppose it was meant to be funny. Well, I've got to get to the office.” He kissed her fondly and got out of there in a hurry.

Since he actually had plenty of time—official business of all sorts was at the proverbial virtual standstill—he decided to walk the mile-and-a-half to work. It took him exactly seven hours. Two blocks from his home a man in a dogcatcher's uniform, accompanied by a gigantic Afghan hound, was gravely attempting to prove to a baffled city inspector that the standard-sized hydrant was unfair to his charge, due to its lack of height.

A half mile further on, a red-bearded man talked to a crowd of pleased listeners on the fact that women must go. Since he was standing well down on the ladder of an open manhole, with only head and whiskers protruding, it

took Hoey several minutes to get close enough to see the speaker. Then, some imp from his past self conquering his current concern, he found himself moved to ask—when red-beard indulged in one of his infrequent pauses for breath, "Pardon me, sir, but where do you suggest women go to?"

Red-beard looked horrendously affronted, said primly, "That, sir, is a topic no gentleman discusses in public," and promptly vanished into subterranean haven. The small crowd scattered in search of other entertainment, and Truscott Hoey walked on alone.

He paused at various saloons that seemed to crop up in his path, indulging successively in a bottle of Black Horse ale, a vermouth cassis, a double Gibson and a scotch on the rocks. He discovered then that it was lunchtime, so he ate, accompanying his solitary meal with a split of sparkling Burgundy. When he finally reached his office, the afternoon sun was shedding its enticing warmth and it was, he decided, time to turn around and go home.

THOUGHT of the lovely sociologist with her pickled walnut soul, awaiting him, caused him to go on in. His secretary had given up and gone home, but Vicky Strawbridge was sitting in her chair, looking even lovelier than his memories. The fact of her presence seemed to him entirely proper and fitting and he said, "Come on Vicky, let's go somewhere and get married."

"I love you, darling," she replied, rising and tamping out her cigarette in the diametric center of his secretary's desk flower, "but I'm afraid we haven't time."

"It's immaterial," he told her. Then, "Why hasn't Raoul married you, the stoat?"

"Because I haven't asked him," she replied promptly. "Besides, if I let him, he'd divorce me in six months."

He eyed her thoughtfully, said,

"Not a bad idea. If we can't get married, let's get a divorce. We could have a hell of a time in Reno together, playing crokinole on a dude ranch."

Vicky came close to him, sniffed, peered into his eyes and giggled. "Tru, darling," she said, "I believe you're drunk."

"As always," he told her gravely, "your beliefs do you vast credit. Or here is an alternate suggestion—why don't you take both Raoul and me to Tibet? I hear polyandry is quite in order there."

Vicky stopped laughing and shook her red-gold head, scattering copper fire throughout the office foyer. Then she grew serious and her voice was a trifle uneven and breathless. She said, "Tru, we're late now; Raoul sent me to get you."

"Funny thing," he remarked as he closed the office door behind them. "Raoul never sent me at all. No message—no message whatsoever. Shall we walk or ride?"

"I'm driving," she told him and that was that.

When he awoke to find that either Vicky, or one of Raoul's gadgets, had stopped the car in front of the windowless house in the country, the sun was setting behind Salome veils of feathered clouds and he felt like the devil. He moaned and got out of the car, licking stone-dry lips with an even drier tongue.

Vicky laughed at his distress and took his arm and led him into the house. She said, "Poor Tru—but that's what you get for keeping me waiting."

"I did it all with my little hatchet," Tru replied. He accepted gratefully the pick-up she procured him quickly with the aid of robotic servants, gulped it down at a draught. "Lord!" he exclaimed, gagging slightly at its strength. "That tastes good!"

"You'll be all right in a couple of minutes," she told him, walked ahead of him into the long low room with its polarized one-way-glass picture wall.

Outside, the grounds sloped gently away, their green surfaces greying in the twilight.

Somewhat to his surprise he did feel better physically almost at once—and with lessening of his physical woes a sense of guilt and forboding overcame him. His own derelictions of the day had been inexcusable and what lay ahead... He looked sharply at Vicky, who was standing by the window-wall, inhaling a cigarette, said, "All right, honey, what in hell is this all about?"

She gestured vaguely, replied, "It's Raoul's show, Tru. Things are coming to a head."

"You're telling me," he groaned, rubbing his still-throbbing forehead. "Got another of those trick drinks?"

She pushed a button somewhere with her foot and, seconds later, a portable bar, fully equipped, rolled into the room by itself. Expertly she mixed a potion, filled two unsmall glasses, handed him one. He said, "Ah, Hebe, the cupbearer to the Gods!", and drank.

3



RAOUL came in directly, looking graven-image as ever save for his eyes, which had a somewhat feverish glint. He sipped sparingly at a cocktail and talked trivialities until dinner was served, when he did

not talk at all.

It was quite a meal, radar-cooked and served on a robot-table that came by itself in response to a pushbutton signal, as had the portable bar. It included petite marmite, filet de bouef Wellington, souffle potatoes, asparagus and a fruit compote flavored with kirsch. The wines and brandy were perfection, as was the bitter coffee.

Feeling restored almost to normal Tru shook his head and said to them, "If this is a sample of your usual fare, I don't see how you keep your figgers, children."

"I keep a staff of male Nubian slaves in the cellar," Vicky replied promptly. "They take care of mine; and Raoul employs an artificially-induced tapeworm."

Raoul smiled slowly, said to Tru, "She's incredible, isn't she?" Then, at his guest's nod, "Seriously, this is something of a celebration, Tru. You and Vicky used to make something of a career out of practical jokes—but tonight I cap you both. You're about to see the greatest practical joke of human history."

"Ha—and again hah," said Tru, trying to conceal the gnawing worry within him. "When does it start?"

Raoul glanced at a timepiece built into the wall above the huge convex vidar screen at its end and said, "It should be already under way. Vicky, do you mind...?"

She did things with a couple of buttons. The foodwagon rolled silently back to its hidingplace and the vidar-screen flashed into brilliant color. Already night had fallen outside, and the view beyond the picture window was viewed once more via infra-red illumination.

Tru concealed outright panic by holding a brandy-inhaler under his nose, first sniffing then sipping gently, his eyes on the screen. He glanced only briefly at Vicky, and the little vertical line of worry between her brows did nothing to reassure him. She knew as did he that Raoul was utterly without the true sense of relative values upon which all humor is based. And that a man with such immense powers and such a deep-rooted bitterness against humanity should have produced... But Tru did not yet know what he *had* produced. He decided to rain-check panic until he knew more.

This night it quickly became evident that the playboys had taken complete charge of all communications. They were directing the vidar-broadcasts, which were the same on all channels. Their pleasant voices, male and occasionally female, were offering pungently-amused comment on the pictures that showed on the big screen.

Tru watched every one of the premonitions that had been eroding his nerves in the past several months come to life in front of him. In New York, Washington, Chicago, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Montreal, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Capetown, Cairo, Delhi, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, London, Stockholm—everywhere in the free world the story was the same. Well-organized groups of playboys and playgirls, employing a sure technique of practical jokes, were taking over.

Fire engines were decoyed to block traffic around key control points by false alarms, then deliberately held by traffic jams. Policemen, guards and officials who sought to stem the movement were reduced to imbecilic helplessness by laughing gas. Liquor stores were purchased, lock, stock and half-keg, and their contents dispensed freely to all comers. Everywhere the screen revealed a gigantic carnival, such as not even Nice, New Orleans or Rio had ever known.

AS THE EVENING went on, for the first time in decades television hookups from behind the Iron Curtain were attained. Similar scenes in Bucharest, Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Shanghai, Moscow and Leningrad filled the screen as Eastern Europeans and Asiatics threw off care and enmity and romped joyously in the streets.

Police and soldiers, summoned to stem the revels, were chivvied and jostled and disrupted by laughing mobs until they threw away their weapons

and joined in the fun. Those who didn't, were given drumhead trials, forced to drink vodka or whiskey or arrack or champagne, then "executed" according to the "decree of the court" with rubber handropes, or popguns, or electric chairs that exploded in harmless fireworks when the juice was turned on.

Dawn was breaking in its ladies' underwear pink when at last the scenes of rioting were replaced by a close-up of a smilingly handsome young man and woman, who made brief speeches. Said the man, "The world is now under the rule of a new monarch—joy. A council of others, like myself and my companion, has taken provisional control in North America, and the other continents and islands of the globe. In two hours, line up at your local polling-booth and vote whether or not you wish a life of freedom from war and worry and needless toil."

The woman took over shortly afterward to explain that, if approved, the new regime would ensure that no man or woman worked more than two hours a day, four days a week, but that all should work—even the aged and infirm—in capacities suited to their infirmities.

"My idea," Raoul said, sotto voce, to Tru. "People can't face idleness any more than you or I."

Tru lifted his head from his hands and said, "Raoul, you say this is the greatest joke of human history. What's the point? Surely there must be more to it than turning the world into a playground."

Raoul laughed silently. He replied, "Tru, the world sold me down the river when I attempted to ease its problems. So now I've sold the world."

Tru felt himself age with the seconds. He recalled his earlier fears about the playboys. They had appeared from nowhere, with untraceable antecedents, had gradually broken

down world-barriers against frivolity. He recalled Raoul's use of the word "invaders" in connection with them during his earlier visit. He said, "Raoul, who are the buyers? Where do they come from? And what is their price?"

The scientist looked at him with cool triumph in his eyes. He said, "They come from another dimension—in space, not in time. Occasionally one or two at a time have been able to break through the barrier at such spots as the Oregon vortex—you know, those odd domes of force within which all natural laws go awry.

"When I retired here, once I got over my mad, I found myself for the first time in my life with nothing to do. In the course of seeking some sort of worthwhile study, I experimented with such spots—there is one quite close to his house. I extended the estate to cover it as soon as I had viewed it. And I ultimately discovered it to be a gateway between worlds."

"Is he kidding?" Tru asked Vicky. She shook her head and her eyes were deadly serious. She, too, was frightened, he thought.

"It's true," Raoul assured him. "I know what you're thinking; but when I first discovered the possibility of its use I put an electric-eye camera-trap on it. I kept that camera-trap in operation for almost two years before anyone came through. While I never did get in touch with him, my instruments showed me enough so that I could understand at least elements of the vortex's use as a gateway."

"Is this invasion something new?" Tru inquired. He was numb with acceptance of the hitherto incredible.

RAOUL LAUGHED, went on to explain that the gateways or portals had been in existence beyond history but that only in the past few centuries had "visitors" been able to use them. "The difficulties from their end are frightful," he concluded. "Until I

got to work with them only about one in ten could make the trip safely, only one in a hundred got back."

"Then why do they bother?" Tru asked him.

"Because they must," said the scientist. Their world, it seemed, had been almost stripped of its usable metallic elements and space travel for alien material was utterly impractical. "They need our barely-tapped ferrous and rhodomagnetic elements," he stated.

"What are they like?" Tru wanted to know.

"You've seen them—you've heard them," Raoul replied. "Excepting company present they're the only good people I've ever met."

"And what price are they exacting?" Tru demanded.

"Use of the planet," was the reply. "Some part of their population must migrate here, if decent living is to be maintained at home—their home. In return, they are going to eliminate most of Earth's evils. With Vicky's help, and your past as example, we set up this utterly new type of coup d'état. Humanity will not suffer."

"Are they—superior?" Tru asked, feeling a strange sickness of fright pervade him.

"No to you—or to Vicky or myself," said Raoul with assurance. "They give freely of what they know—and their science and culture are prodigiously high. They are marvelously flexible folk—and have managed to abolish most of the ills they propose to abolish here."

"Well, I hope it works out as well as you hope," Tru told him. Then, "What are you getting out of it, sonnyboy?"

Raoul seemed to withdraw behind an invisible wall. He hesitated, said finally, "My price is small—but sufficient unto my needs."

"Get our Old Testament, Tru," gibed Vicky, smiling. Exhausted, they

breakfasted on robot-prepared kidneys and bacon and Vicky suggested Tru stay on for awhile. He was tempted but shook his head.

"I suppose I still have a job," he told her. "I must see at first hand how this damned invasion goes over. May I borrow a car?"

"I'll have it out front for you," Raoul told him. "I think you're making a mistake; this is as important a point as any other."

"As a point, yes," said Tru, smiling grayly, "but it has so few people."

Vicky again went with him to the door. When he slid behind the wheel of the car awaiting him, she said, "Don't have it driven back. Come back yourself. So much is happening, that I think Raoul..." She paused, bit her nether lip, then concluded, "I think it's good for him to have you around. There's a lot you don't know yet."

Her ominous words kept him awake during the drive back to the city. It was a city gone mad. Looking at the faces he saw on the streets, listening to the singing and sounds of joy, he had no doubt as to the way the vote was going. The invaders were in.

4



AT HOME, Sally Jo was sitting stiffly upright at the dining-room table, facing a bottle of gin that was half-empty. She said, thickly and solemnly, "So now we eat, drink and make merry for tomorrow we need

no more sociologists." She shook her head and repeated it, save that this time she had it, "...no soash moriologists." She had removed every stitch of clothing from her pneumatic young body.

Tru led her gently to bed, still muttering, went into the living room and mixed a drink. *Poor little idiot*, he thought, *she's trying to forget her purpose in life, and she doesn't know how.* Things were going to be very rough for awhile on the serious-minded, he decided.

They were. Once the euphoria of the first few days wore off, conditioned morality proceeded to have itself a hell of a hangover. Wisely, the new rulers relaxed their merry pace. Ministers were allowed to fulminate occasionally, without finding their rostrum bibles hollowed out to contain figurine of classic nymphs and satyrs, or bottles of champagne. Industrialists and politicians were permitted to sputter in print.

But those who wanted joy found it—and having found it, showed no desire to give it up. Work got done, if anything, better than before—since conflict was largely eliminated, and most men and women cooperated to lighten the burdens of others in the name of pleasure.

As a sort of super human-relations counsels, Tru found himself increasingly in contact with the invaders. On the whole he liked them—how could he help it, since they openly admitted him to have been the pattern-maker of their revolution—yet, lurking behind their pleasant facades, he sensed a purpose that evaded and worried him.

With difficulty he managed to have Sally Jo placed in a sanitorium—they were dangerously crowded. His workday was closer to sixteen hours than the two that was rapidly becoming the average. Although he never ran into head-on opposition when he proposed plans for improving human work and living conditions, he began to get the feeling of being inside a feather-bed—or a padded cell. The invaders always gave in to pressure, but they never seemed to break.

In general, the invaders seemed lit-

tle interested in humanity. They saw to it that people were happy and cared for, certainly, but they never were outraged or enthusiastic. It was a little, he felt, like being a domestic animal in some carefully-regulated stockyard.

One afternoon, some three weeks following the coup d'etat that had made the playboy supreme on Earth, he paid a visit to the former President, now living almost forgotten in Blair House. The President, before the invasion, had been an able, tough-minded man of high convictions and purpose.

Tru found him alone in his study, sipping brandy. His face had loosened. He welcomed Tru, offered him a drink, said, "This whole business is right up your alley, isn't it, Hoey?"

"I'm not sure," Tru told him. "In fact, I think it's got to stop. They're coming in by the hundreds now. Next month it will be thousands, then millions. There won't be room."

"I know," replied the defeated former Chief Executive. "Dammit, Tru, how *well* I know!" For a moment, his former strength seemed to have returned; then it faded as he added, "But what can I do? What can any of us do? These charming sons have us by the short hairs."

"Spoken like a true politician," Tru told him. Then, "But there must be some way to steal off the portals for keeps. If we don't, we're going to be shunted aside. They've got Raoul Martinsen's robotics under way now; a year from now they'll want four hours of work a day from us instead of two. And then..." He shrugged.

Again the ex-President flashed fire. He said, "We've sold out—the whole damned world. We're like the Indians who gave Manhattan Island to Peter Minuit for some cloth and beads, and a couple of kegs of rum. In return for personal happiness, we've handed over a planet to whom happiness is as easi-

ly-made as the wampum of the early Dutch."

IT WAS A disturbing thought. Tru went back to his apartment, mulling it over. The former President, not for the first time, had put his finger on the factor that was underlying Tru's recent worry. Humanity, unwittingly spurred by Raoul Martinsen's bitterness and genius, had turned over a precious planet for a few beads.

The ash-blond alien, who had moved in to share his apartment a week before, greeted him affectionately and said, "Darling, show me how to mix a daiquiri. You've been illegally serious of late."

He looked at her physical perfection and sighed for Vicky, even for Sally Jo. After what the ex-President had told him he felt a little like a male Pocohantas. He said, when he handed her her cocktail, "Baby, why don't you get in trouble with some savage human so that I can fling myself into the electric chair with you, and save your beautiful hide from scorching."

She laughed joyously, patted his cheek and told him, "You do think of the most whimsical things, honeybear."

"I just thought of another one," he told her. "I borrowed a car over a month ago and I'm going to return it. Make yourself at home, sweetypie, and get yourself a new honeybear for awhile."

"I'm coming with you," she said promptly. "Being with someone who isn't always pleasant is—well, it's exciting. You're so different from the men I've known, so deliciously..." Her voice trailed off as she sought the word, failed to find it.

"Primitive," he told her. He held her off when she tried to take him in her arms, added, "No, Zuleika"—she had selected this odd name in her new-world home—"I'm making this one by myself."

She pouted, but put up no argu-

ment, said, "How long will you be away, honeybear?"

"Not long," he told her. "I'll let you know." He got out of there in a hurry. Zuleika was a marvelous woman, but her evenness of temperament on him a little and that "honeybear" business...!

She called him from the door while he was awaiting the elevator, asked him where he'd be. He told her and she made an odd face and said, "Oh, the Moon man. Well, have yourself a ball, baby."

Her description of Raoul—and, more important, the half-mocking tone in which she delivered it—upset Tru considerably. Taken along with what the ex-President had said, it provided him with plenty of food for thought during the two-hundred-mile drive.

By right, even the invaders should have a sort of reverence for the scientist who had opened wide the gates for their invasion—if the erstwhile Chief Executive's theory were as logical as it sounded. He culled back through his memory and education, remembered the respect of the Jamestown settlers for Powhatan; that of the Pilgrims for Massasoit; the respect of Cortez for Princess Marina, and that of late 18th-century English and Americans for Joseph Brant.

The transdimensional invaders, he thought, owed his former roommate more respect. And that "Moon man" business—he wondered how that applied. Then he thought some more, while Raoul's supercar ate up the evening miles, and began to get the glimmering of a theory. Taking into account Raoul's immaturity, his genius, his bitter misanthropy, Tru began to rear a structure of ideas that, he felt certain, was close to the truth.

VICKY'S words of greeting, "Oh, Tru, I'm so glad you've come—we were beginning to be afraid you'd be too late," confirmed his suspicions.

He replied, "Too late for what?"

and watched her lashes veil her confusion. Then, before she could answer, "Where's Raoul? I'd like to talk to him."

And so they talked, the three of them, once again in the room with the infra-red one-way picture-wall—or rather Tru and Raoul talked and Vicky listened, as was her wont. Tru told them of his visit to the ex-President and of the latter's penetrating remark.

"The old goat's smarter than I gave him credit for," said Raoul thoughtfully. "Not a bad simile—wampum."

"You knew it all of the time, of course," said Tru.

"Of course," the scientist affirmed. "You don't think I went into this blind, do you? I laid it all out with emissaries of the invaders before I made their ports practicable."

"I don't think you went into it blind, Raoul," Tru told him. "But I wonder if you saw as far ahead as they did."

"If you mean, did I see what lies ahead for humanity at large—I did," the scientist said sincerely. "So—ultimately humanity may be confined to reservations, like the Indians. So what? They'll be happier and healthier than ever before in their lives."

Tru looked at Vicky, whose expression revealed nothing, then at the scientist, who seemed mildly-puzzled at the course of Tru's questions. Then he said, "Raoul, remember, you tried to make people happy once before—with robotics. They didn't like it much."

"Because they were consumed with hatred and ambition and fear," said the genius. "Now, with these elements removed, they are ready to live as they should and enjoy it."

"Under restriction, Raoul," Tru told him. "Remember that. One of these days, a lot of people are going to wake up and realise how they've been jobbed. There'll be one hell of a revolt. They won't win, of course;

they haven't a chance. But they'll try, and a hell of a lot of them are going to get killed trying."

"The more fools they," said Raoul. "Is it anyone's fault but their own if they allow their stupidity to lead them to destruction? Actually, Tru, there won't be much bloodshed. The invaders are far too clever to let things get that far out of hand."

"I want to know one thing, Raoul," said Tru. "Is it too late now to stop them—stop them coming through the portals?"

Raoul looked startled, as if this thought had not previously occurred to him. After a moment he said slowly, "N-no, I suppose not. I could use a silicon spray to nullify the atomic balance—but while I'm not trying to sound snotty, Tru, you wouldn't understand."

"Almost certainly not," said Tru, smiling. Then, "But you *could* stop them if you wanted to, or had to—right?"

"I guess so," said the scientist. "But they've given me no reason even to think of it. They're magnificent people—and I do mean people. They've made me an offer and kept their side of it. I intend to keep mine."

"When do you plan to leave for the Moon?" Tru asked him

Vicky gasped, and Raoul came halfway up out of his low chair. He looked faintly annoyed, then asked, "How the devil did you get onto that?"

"I work with them," he replied. "To some extent I even live with them." His eyes avoided the curiosity he knew lay in Vicky's. "I manage to pick up a piece of the puzzle here and there."

Raoul got up, as did Vicky. For a moment Tru thought he was going to be thrown out on his ear. But the scientist said, "All right, Tru, since you know so much you might as well see the rest. Would you care to look at the ship?"

BURNISHED and beautifully streamlined, it lay in its cradle in an underground hangar less than a quarter-mile from the house. From Venturi to nose, the single-step winged rocket extended almost two-hundred yards. Even as they watched, it was being stocked by robotic machinery with stores and fuel. Within, it was compact but incredibly comfortable; as Raoul proudly explained, the living quarters of the rocket would, on landing, be detached to form the first human home on the Moon.

"It looks rather cramped for an extended stay," said Tru.

"That will only be a matter of hours," the scientist told him. "Already we have despatched a dozen similar supply-rockets to a selected spot on the far side of the Moon. They contain the robots that will build our atmosphere-dome as soon as we put them in operation upon landing. Within months we'll have our own grass and fresh fruit and vegetables—even our own flower-gardens."

Knowing Raoul's incredible genius, Tru didn't doubt it. But he looked at Vicky and said, "We? Does that mean...?"

"Yes, Tru—I'm going along for the ride," she told him quietly. There was a faint proud smile on her beautiful lips. "Raoul wanted to go alone but I wouldn't let him. We may have children there in time. It would be something quite different to mother the first child born on the Moon."

"That's going a long way to be different," said Tru a bit sadly. The thought of Vicky being wasted on that rugged, barren satellite—with no other eyes than Raoul's to view her loveliness—shook him. But then he realized that it represented no real social change; Vicky had locked herself up in the selfmade hell of the man she had chosen for years, here on Earth.

"Darling, don't look so shocked," she said softly. "After all, among the

three of us we've done everything else."

There was no gain saying that. Tru ran a hand along the smooth, metallic surface of the huge spaceship, then turned away. And Raoul said, "You can come along if you like—there's room and plenty of supplies for you and anyone else you care to bring."

Tru was touched. He slung an arm across Raoul's shoulders as he hadn't since they roomed together in college, said, "No, Raoul. Don't think I'm not grateful but it wouldn't work. I've got to do my job, whatever it turns out to be, down here in the muck with the rest of us Indians. You and Vicky can have the Moon to yourself—for awhile."

The scientist's voice was suddenly sharp as he asked, "What do you mean—Tru? Who else...?"

"They helped you make the trip possible, didn't they?"

Raoul looked uncomfortable, replied at last, "Well, yes—let's say they speeded it up for me. As a matter of fact, they suggested it when I told them I wanted to keep away from people the rest of my life. They explained that the Earth would be growing more crowded shortly as they came through in increased numbers, and offered me the Moon."

"What a deal!" marveled Tru, extending a hand to lean against the underbelly of the rocket fuselage. "The Earth for the Moon! Doesn't it occur to you you might have got the small end of the stick?"

Raoul shook his head stubbornly. "Not," he said, "when you throw in the solitude I crave. Oh, I'll rig up a vidar-relay so I won't really be out of touch. I'll be as close to things—Vicky and I—as you or anyone down here."

"Are you sure you'll enjoy the view?" asked Tru. "When you see the fair places of the Earth usurped by this plague of charming locusts you've unleashed upon it, when you see the

metallic juices of this planet sucked dry to maintain their pleasures?"

"You make me sound like a Benedict Arnold," said Raoul. He looked faintly uneasy.

A RETORT lay ready on Tru's lips—but he quelled it. At one stage, during the drive from the city, he had reproached himself bitterly for not having brought along a gun and shooting Raoul dead during his first visit. Now, however, he blessed the heredity and environment that had made it impossible for him ever to grow killing-mad at anyone. For if he had slain Raoul, what slim chance of salvation remained would have vanished. Besides, he thought irrelevantly, Vicky was no Peggy Shippen.

Instead he said, "Raoul, you are beyond doubt the greatest scientist the world has ever known—but you're no genius when it comes to dealing with people. So what makes you believe you can get the best of a deal with the invaders, who are super-people?"

Raoul blushed beneath the healthy tan of his face, and for a moment his eyes narrowed. But he glanced at Vicky, controlled himself, then shook his head. "I don't," he told Tru, "but the very fact of their superiority puts them above David Harum tactics."

"For your sake I hope so," said Tru, lighting a cigarette. "There's one thing I'd like to know—in offering you the Moon, did they promise it would be yours exclusively?"

Raoul looked nettled, then thoughtful. His hesitation was sufficient answer to Tru, who said, "You poor sucker! I thought as much. What happened to the Indians after the white man came? They were shunted from reservation to reservation, until they had nothing left but a few desert-patches our people could not exploit. Do you think your friends, with their super-technology, are going to find *any* of Earth's surface non-exploitable?"

Raoul hesitated again, then said slowly, "Why, no—I guess not. They can spin palaces of desert sand, make plastics of cactus."

"And they'll mine the seabottoms just as vigorously, once they've used up the land areas," Tru told him. "So where are they going to put Earth's people? On the one place they cannot exploit, of course. You tell me they have found space-commerce unprofitable."

"In the meantime what will you have done?" he went on rapidly. "You'll have set up the beginning of a garden on the Moon. Raoul, you're going to wind up with all the remains of humanity—whatever they don't keep in zoos—right in your front yard." He thought of Zuleika's mocking allusion from the doorway of his apartment.

Vicky, after exhaling lazy smoke through her nostrils, said suddenly, "Raoul, darling, he's right. I told you I didn't think we'd made things quite foolproof. Tru, why didn't you tell us sooner?"

The scientist sat down on a crate of foodstuffs and buried his head in his hands. Tru gave him a pat on the back, said to Vicky, "I didn't tell you because I didn't understand it until just now." He went on to explain how his suspicion had grown from out of what the ex-President had told him, what Zuleika had implied in her mocking "the Moon man."

WHEN HE had finished, Raoul lifted his face and asked, "Well, what's to be done now? It's something of a shock for an egoist like me to find I've been playing the patsy."

Said Tru, "The solution is not so difficult. Just brief me on how to close the ports. You take off for your Moon-retreat—if you still want to—and a couple of lads I know and I will see that the invasion is stopped dead. You've kept your word; I've saved

Earth; you'll have your privacy for a lot longer." He paused, added with a grin, "But don't be surprised if Zuleika and I pay you a visit sooner than you think."

"Your Zuleika sounds like quite a woman," said Vicky.

"She is," Tru told her, "and she'll be a lot more of one when she finds out the little game she's playing with me is for keeps."

"I'm glad—I've been worried about you—maybe even feeling a bit guilty," Vicky told him, smiling.

"Damned if I know which of you is the bigger ego," said Tru.

"But what about the invaders already here?" Raoul asked.

"Those, we want," Tru told him promptly. "Hell, they've turned a warring world into one big happy family. As long as they can't overrun it, and shove humanity out of the way, I'm satisfied. I like things the way they are—so let's keep them that way for a while." He paused, "Now, Raoul, how do you propose to seal the ports?"

The scientist got up. He looked years younger. In spite of himself, Tru thought, Raoul *had* improved the world—and improving the world had always been his prime aim. Following him and Vicky, it occurred to Tru that even Raoul's beloved robotics would finally have their day.

Raoul paused in front of a heavy metal door at the end of an underground passageway that had opened in front of them. He said, "Come on into the lab, Tru—you're too damned stupid to make anything out of it but I'll show you the stuff and how to use it. All you have to do is give it a thorough crop-dust from a low-flying plane, and..."

Entering behind his former roommate, Tru found himself wondering how Zuleika would like the Moon—for a visit, not a stay, of course. Once he knocked that damned "honeybear" business out of her...

Index to Volumes One to Four

Volume One: May-June 1950 to March 1951



Volume One: May-June 1950 to March 1951

ANDERSON, POUL	
The Long Return	Sept.-Oct. 64
Incomplete Superman	March 8
ASIMOV, ISAAC	
Day of the Hunters	Nov. 74
BLISH, JAMES	
Battle of the Unborn	May-June 65
What Is "Evidence"?	March 78
BLISH, JAMES & KNIGHT, DAMON	
The Secret People	Nov. 46
COPEL, ALFRED	
The Terror	Nov. 62
de CAMP, L. SPRAGUE	
Wide-Open Planet	Sept.-Oct. 8
del REY, LESTER	
Imitation of Death	May-June 76
Shadows of Empire	July-Aug. 57
The Last Lunacy	March 52
FYFE, H. B.	
Afterthought	Jan. 70
JAMES, EDWIN	
Slave Psychology	Jan. 60
KLASS, MORTON	
Invitation From the Stars	Sept.-Oct. 51
KORNBLUTH, C. M.	
Iteration	Sept.-Oct. 60
KNIGHT, DAMON & BLISH, JAMES	
The Secret People	Nov. 46
KUBILIUS, WALTER	
Cardi Shall Not Die	Nov. 80
The Gray Cloud	March 44
LEIBER JR., FRITZ	
Martians, Keep Out!	July-Aug. 45
LEINSTER, MURRAY	
Nobody Saw The Ship ...	May-June 40
Be Young Again	July-Aug. 28
LONG, FRANK BELKNAP	
The Miniature Menace ...	May-June 50
Martian Homecoming	March 70
LOOMIS, NOEL	
Parking, Unlimited	May-June 70
The Lithium Mountain	March 60
LOWNDES, ROBERT W.	
The Sky's Still The Limit	July-Aug. 89
Beware of Tomorrow	Sept.-Oct. 50
Today & Tomorrow	July-Aug. 11
From The Bookshelf ..	Nov., March
MacCREIGH, JAMES	
The Genius Beasts	Jan. 8

MERRILL, JUDITH	
Barrier of Dread	July-Aug. 72
Woman's Work is Never Done	March 51
MORRISON, WILLIAM	
The Barbarians	Jan. 75
PIPER, H. BEAM	
Flight From Tomorrow ..	Sept.-Oct. 36
SMITH, GEORGE O.	
Dynasty of The Lost	May-June 8
Two Worlds For One	July-Aug. 66
The World-Mover	Nov. 8
SHAVER, RICHARD S.	
Green Man's Grief	Jan. 54
ST. CLAIR, MARGARET	
Age of Prophecy	March 26
WALTON, BRYCE	
Earth Needs A Killer ...	July-Aug. 8
Moon of Memory	Nov. 68
WEST, WALLACE	
The Everlasting Exiles	Jan. 38



Volume Two: May 1951 to March 1952

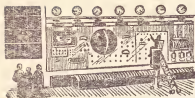
ANDERSON, POUL	
Honorable Enemies	May 8
BLISH, JAMES	
Elixir	Sept. 38
CLARKE, ARTHUR C.	
If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth ..	Sept. 66
The Awakening	Jan. 83
COPEL, ALFRED	
The Awful Weapon	May 50
de CAMP, L. SPRAGUE	
Ultrasonic God	July 36
The So-Called Fourth Dimension	Sept. 50
The Mystic Trance	Nov. 76
False Prophets Shall Rise	Jan. 69
del REY, LESTER	
Mind of Tomorrow	May 56
...And There Was Light	July 53
DYE, CHARLES	
Time Killer	May 85
Momentum	July 59
Regeneration	Sept. 80
FARRELL, JOSEPH	
Fountain of Death	March 70
FRIEDMAN, STUART	
Beautiful, Beautiful, Beautiful	March 79
FYFE, H. B.	
This World Must Die	Sept. 22

HAGGARD, J. HARVEY Fun Can Last Forever	May	67	BIXBY, JEROME The Second Ship	July	31
HENDERSON, GENE L. A Secondary First	Nov.	66	BLAIR, H. CHARLES The Rememberers	May	75
JAMES, EDWIN Mask of Peace	Sept.	56	BLISH, JAMES Readin' and Writhin'	Sept.	66
KUBILIUS, WALTER Go To The Ant	March	46	Testament of Andros	Jan.	70
LESSER, MILTON "A" as in Android	May	74	COLLINS, HUNT Small Fry	Sept.	37
Voices in the Void	Nov.	50	COPPEL, ALFRED Legion of the Lost	Nov.	41
LINDEN, ROSS Quest of the Queen	Jan.	8	de CAMP, L. SPRAGUE Readin' and Writhin'	May	58
LOMBINO, S. A. The Tinkerer	Mar.	35	The Mislaid Tribes	May	69
LOOMIS, NOEL Remember the 4th	July	75	del REY, LESTER Forgive Us Our Debts	May	49
LOWNDES, ROBERT W. From the Bookshelf	May, Sept., Nov., Jan.	ff	Unreasonable Facsimile	July	51
Today and Tomorrow	May	68	DRYFOOS, DAVE Facts of Life	Sept.	75
Readin' and Writhin'	March	68	DYE, CHARLES Because of the Stars	July	12
PETAJA, EMIL Not Quite Human	Jan.	74	FYFE, H. B. Confidence	Sept.	67
PIPER, H. BEAM Genesis	Sept.	8	The Compleat Collector	Jan.	27
ROCKLYNNE, ROSS & WALTON, BRYCE Out of the Atomfire	May	8	Romance	March	37
ROMAN, TARR Captain Barnes and the Law	March	63	HUNTER, GENE The Gods Fear Love	Sept.	10
SHAW, LARRY Stairway to the Stars	Sept.	70	JONES, RAYMOND F. Doomsday's Color Press	Nov.	12
SHERMAN, PETER MICHAEL The Troubadour	Sept.	47	The Moon is Death	March	27
SMITH, GEORGE O. Dark Recess	July	8	KNIGHT, DAMON In the Beginning	Jan.	53
ST. CLAIR, MARGARET The Way Back	Nov.	82	LOWNDES, ROBERT W. Readin' and Writhin'	May, Jan., March	ff
TEMPLE, WILLIAM F. Experiment in Genius	Nov.	8	Editorials	May	ff
WALTON, BRYCE They Will Destroy	Jan.	42	MacCREIGH, JAMES & MERRIL, JUDITH A Big Man With the Girls ..	March	45
WALTON, BRYCE & ROCKLYNNE, ROSS Out of the Atomfire	May	8	MARTELO, LEO LOUIS Hypnotism: Facts vs. Fiction	Jan.	49
WELLMAN, MANLY WADE Ismail, the Outworlder	Nov.	32	NOURSE, ALAN E. Final Barrier	Sept.	27
WILSON, RICHARD Dark Cloud	May	82	RABOID, MAURICE The Twice-Told Man	May	60
WILSON, TOM Devil's Cargo	March	10	SHECKLEY, ROBERT We Are Alone	Nov.	31
YOUD, C. S. In the Balance	July	64	SIMAK, CLIFFORD D. ...And the Truth Shall Make You Free	March	52
			SINGER, BEN Rejection Slip	May	66
			Realization	July	85
			WARNER JR., HARRY Cold War	March	64
			WALTON, BRYCE Minority Decision	Jan.	39
			WEST, WALLACE Thy Days Are Numbered	May	28
			They Shall Rise	July	62
			We Will Inherit	Sept.	46
			...And Found Wanting	Nov.	54
			WILSON, RICHARD Incident In Iopa	Jan.	67
			WINTERBOTHAM, R. R. The Winning of Wooha	Nov.	47
			WYNDHAM, JOHN Time Stops Today	Jan.	12



Volume Three: May 1952 to March 1953

ANDERSON, POUL Courier of Chaos	March	10
BERRYMAN, JOHN Equations of Destiny	May	12



Volume Four: May 1953 to March 1954

ARR, STEPHEN			
The Square Peg	March	44	
BANKS, RAYMOND E.			
Ixtl, Igo, Son	Sept.	64	
BINDER, EANDO			
The Payoff	March	39	
BLSH, JAMES			
Readin' and Writhin'	Sept.	46	
BUDRYS, ALGIS			
Stand Watch in the Sky	Sept.	27	
To Civilize	Jan.	67	
CROSSEN, KEN			
Readin' and Writhin'	Sept.	40	
COX JR., IRVING E.			
To Save a World	Sept.	70	
de CAMP, L. SPRAGUE			
The Phantom Phoenicians	Sept.	58	
De VET, CHARLES			
Countercheck	Nov.	64	
del REY, LESTER			
Get Thee Behind Me, Clio	May	61	
DICKSON, GORDON R.			
Graveyard	July	10	
Counter-Irritant	Nov.	42	
DRYFOOS, DAVE			
High Sign	Jan.	73	
The Old-Fashioned Spaceman	March	28	
DYE, CHARLES			
The Aeropause	July	25	
Double-Talk	Sept.	35	
GARRETT, RANDALL			
The Wayward Course	March	10	
GRINNELL, DAVID			
Road to Rome	July	44	
KNIGHT, DAMON			
Readin' and Writhin'	May, Nov., March		
KUBILIUS, WALTER			
Judas of the Spaceways	May	53	
LATHAM, PHILIP			
Martian Ritual	July	47	
Comeback	Nov.	55	
LOWNDES, ROBERT W.			
Readin' and Writhin'	May, July, Sept., Nov.		
Editorials	May	ff	
MacLEAN, KATHERINE			
Where or When?	July	55	
MACHADO JR., ALFRED			
Tenth Level Enigma	May	41	
MADLE, ROBERT A.			
Utopias in Contrast	July	61	
Inside Science Fiction	Sept.	ff	
MERWIN JR., SAM			
Wampum	March	58	
MOORE, WARD			
Rx Jupiter Save Us	Jan.	10	
NEVILLE, KRIS			
Dust Thou Art	Sept.	10	
OTTUM, ROBERT K.			
Anyone Here Seen Herbie Green?	Sept.	54	
REYNOLDS, MACK			
Please to Remember	Sept.	47	
SHECKLEY, ROBERT			
Ultimatum	Nov.	10	
TENN, WILLIAM			
Liberation of Earth	May	29	
THOMAS, THEODORE L.			
The Penultimate Weapon	Jan.	81	
VANCE, JACK			
Ecological Onslaught	May	10	
WARNER JR., HARRY			
The World Is Yours	May	66	
Freedom of the Press	Sept.	24	
WILSON, RICHARD			
Strike	July	35	
New Weapon	Nov.	26	
WINTERBOTHAM, RUSS.			
Ten Minutes to Daylight	Jan.	63	

The index will appear hereafter in the final issue of each volume, and should occupy no more than one full page — most likely a half page. Would you like to see indexes to the already-completed volumes of *Dynamic Science Fiction* and *Science Fiction Quarterly* in the forthcoming issues of these magazines, or would you prefer the index only at the end of volumes? Or would you rather skip the matter entirely. In this case, I'll be guided by your wishes. . . RWL

THE SQUARE PEG

(continued from page 52)

The Chief looked surprised. "Why of course," he said. "I thought you must have guessed; it seemed so obvious that your ambition, your drive, your determination to overcome all obstacles, your intense desire to dominate, and all your other complex of neuroses fitted you for the unpleasant job of leadership, and none other. And after that amazing scene in The Preserve, well..." The Chief trailed off.

"Of course," the Chief continued, "you'll have to train for several years; you have an awful lot to learn about our culture."

Al Rogers swung his legs off of the bed and stood up disregarding his weakness. He walked quickly to the window and looked out at the world spread out before him.

"The planets," he laughed excitedly. "A whole world to work with. We'll not only reach the planets, we'll reach the stars."

"I'm sure," the Director said sarcastically, getting up from his chair. "Wait until you try and instill your enthusiasm into our well-fed, comfortable, perfectly-adjusted citizenry. Anyway, I'll see you at my office tomorrow

at ten. If you gentlemen will excuse me."

"Wait a minute," the little Chief of Personnel said walking rapidly after the Director, "I want to discuss the training-program."

Glori got up and turned to follow them.

"One moment Miss Smyth," Al called after her.

She turned, her face expressionless. "Yes?"

Al reached her in two quick steps. He slipped his left arm around the small of her back and pulled her roughly to him. Her body was soft and warm. Hungrily his lips met hers.

He pushed her away. "You knew I was going to do that," he said angrily.

She stood there, her breasts rising and falling as she breathed quickly, and she smiled. "Of course," she said; "the charts indicated it." Then she smiled. "But I'd have known, anyway."

Al laughed. "We savages are all alike," he said, and he drew her to him again. Only this time he forgot to let go.



Remembered Words

A reader, approving of the originals contest, adds, "But there are not enough letters to pick from if you exclude the letters written by pros and organizations." It's a point, but one over which I have little control, since I select what seems to be the best of the letters received.

Feeling seems to be more along the lines expressed by Dan Butler, so we were dropping the contest with this issue, though I held originals for the January winners. Eric Fennell, Val Walker, and Lester del Rey will receive as good-looking originals as we have left, since they drew the most votes from our November polls.

A Department For Science-Fictionists



(continued from page 8)

der if Shakespeare's language was not considered "corrupt" (in many instances) by the "cultured" and "correct" people of his own time. (If you consider that his plays are full of puns and special usages of the commonality, it's very likely that purists of the late 16th and early 17th Centuries were anything but impressed.)

Sometimes the blurring of meanings turns out to be a temporary affair. If I were to call you a Jacobin today, it might not be too hard for you to find out what I meant, simply by consulting an encyclopedia. However, had you been called a Jacobin in 1800, here in New York, it would have been quite a different matter; "Jacobin" was a term of abuse with as precise a definition, and as slippery a use, as "red" or "communist" today. More often, though, once a word or phrase is "corrupted", it never regains its older currency, and is finally included in later editions of dictionaries with the new meaning listed as "preferred". When Shakespeare has Hamlet say, "I doubt some foul play", he doesn't mean that Hamlet is doubtful, but rather suspicious; "doubt" meant also "to suspect" in 16th & 17th Century English.

So, while there's no *guarantee* that everyone will understand you if you use the "right words" there's a better chance of people getting what you mean if you do use the right words—in the sense of *currently-employed usages, and what they mean to your audience*, regardless of how you may dislike the current meanings.

Now, to give our authors the once-over.

RANDALL GARRETT came up in the January 1951 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*, with a lead novelet entitled, "The Waiting Game". His "Characteristics Unusual" was a hit in last August's *Science Fiction Quarterly*.

SAM MERWIN, JR., veteran editor and author, needs no introduction to the fans, but new readers are advised that Merwin has authored many fine novels, novelets, and short stories of the science-fiction type. One of his latest novels is "Killer To Come", recently released by Abelard Press.

STEPHEN ARR is a newcomer, but this isn't his first-published story. That

one was "The Ball", which appeared in the 2d issue of *Vortex Science Fiction*.

DAVE DRYFOOS has become pretty much of a regular, turning out enjoyable stories at a gratifying pace. He was first seen in the October 1950 issue of *Fantastic Adventures* with a short story called, "Lest Ye Be Judged".

EANDO BINDER is one of the oldtimers, whose record as an author goes back to the days when there were but three science fiction magazines—*Amazing*, *Astounding*, and *Wonder*. He's probably best-remembered for his "Adam Link" series, which ran in *Amazing Stories* between the issues of January 1939 and April 1942. There were ten in all.

Letters

CLOSER THAN YOU THINK by Ken Crossen

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I finally ran into a copy of the November issue and got to read your editorial and Damon's review.

First, I'd like to thank you for those direct remarks about my stand in the introduction to "Future Tense". I am always quite happy, too, to find an editor or writer agreeing with me on such things, not because it's agreement but because I feel there are ideas and ideals involved which cannot be stated too often or too emphatically.

Actually, we are even more in agreement than I think you are aware. The anti-eggheads have already so destroyed our language that much communication is lost unless time and space is constantly devoted to defining terms.

I think you and Damon both misunderstood my "angry man" reference. I think that a more precise phrase would have been to say "passionate man", but it has become impossible to use this term without giving the impression that you're talking about sex. So I used "angry" meaning "one who is involved" (not completely in the Sartre sense) as opposed to those writers who claim to have taken an objective stand. ... True that one could call Mike Hammer an angry man, and by analysis this would



make Spillane an angry man, but not in the sense I meant. I'm sure that Spillane is an angry man in the sense that he is filled with anger and hatred. I don't think he's so much mad at corruption as he is merely mad at people—women, perhaps more than men.

Nor when I say that the writer must write about the world in which he lives do I mean that he should preach, or even consciously direct. The Marxist approach to literature is not for me. I think every writer must entertain, that this is his first obligation to his reader. But I also say that a writer cannot write without "selling" a point of view. This is especially true of Spillane and others who claim variously that they write only to entertain, to make money, or whatever. Mickey Spillane's soapbox is one of the biggest and it is certainly irresponsible. I often think that Spillane is one of those who should be made to write Dr. Johnson's dictum on the blackboard one thousand times a day. Dr. Johnson's because he is so often quoted, out of context, about only the fool writing for any reason other than money. Why the hell doesn't somebody remember that he also said that every writer must learn to distinguish between that which is established because it is right, and that which is right because it is established?

I, personally, have never in my life read about a story which did not, in some way, convey many of the author's observations on life around him. One of the usual classic examples of the light and entertaining writer is P. G. Wodehouse. Yet, the Wodehouse stories are jammed with his opinions—camouflaged, it's true, but there. One could write a book on the ideas promoted by Spillane. The same is true of every other writer. What arouses me more than anything else is the disclaimer these writers also put forth—piously crossing their fingers and swearing they're doing nothing but giving folks a little old fashioned pleasure. I say—since I am equally passionately opposed to censorship in any form—let them write irresponsibly if they want to, but let's recognize such writing for what it is. The selling of under-the-counter literature across the counter doesn't change the literature; it may change the customer.

Anyway, the purpose of all this was to applaud you, not to make a speech.

The point's well taken, though I wonder if matters would not have been a little clearer had you used the

term "involved man" with just a few words to indicate that you didn't go all the way—or even any of the way, if such is the case—with Sartre's definition of the phrase.

Some leeway has to be made, though, for the author who is deliberately assuming attitudes and opinions entirely foreign to his own for the sake of verisimilitude in a story. Say, for example, I were writing a story about Goebbels, in which the doctor was the chief character. Obviously, I would not portray Goebbels according to my own viewpoint, entirely, or National Socialism from my opinion of it; Goebbels and his party would both be presented as he and others in it saw it, with any opposing views coming from the opposition. Such viewpoint, from the leading characters, would be as strong or weak, logical or otherwise as befitted the character in question. (True, my own personality could not help but color the story, but my attempt would be to see through the character's eyes, and judge according to his lights, as closely as possible.) In such a case, would a reader or critic be justified in deducing that Lowndes was a nazi or neo-nazi—particularly if I submerged myself successfully?

In the old days, it was customary for the author to intrude deliberately, point up the story with his own opinions of his characters, and comment upon their actions. If someone took a drink, you got an essay from the author on the evils of demon rum; if someone played poker, the author went into a diatribe against gambling; when the "villain" came on stage, we had a lecture on his repulsive personality, character, and often a survey of his career, with attending polemics on whatever weakness, hereditary or environmental, etc., misfortune led him down the Road to Ruin. Oh, there was no question of the author possibly condoning any evil, or speaking for it.

Lord be praised, this type of writing

is now buried. But auctorial responsibility should not be extended to responsibility for the opinions of any character in the story whom the reader may not like.

HAVE MERCY ON US by Dan Butler

Dear RWL:

Your question on the voting coupon this time finally stirred me out of my lethargy long enough to write you on a subject I'd often thought of writing about. Guess you never received any of my telepaths.

First you tried paying for the letters, and you had to admit finally that it didn't work—you didn't get as many or as interesting letters as you felt you might get if it were all on an amateur basis. Then you tried the originals-contest idea, which *Planet Stories* has been using for many a year—matter of fact, didn't one of your friends once win first prize in it? So perhaps you got more letters, and perhaps some who didn't like the idea of paying for letters started to write in.

But what have you got?

Do you have a letter-department that is really worth all the space devoted to it?

Let me put it bluntly: I don't think you have. "Down To Earth", and its counterparts in *Dynamic* and *SEFQ* are not bad letter departments, and you don't run some of the silly kinds of letters one sees elsewhere—but just the same, there are too many letters that shouldn't be published in a professional magazine. In a fan magazine they'd be all right; I don't mean that either they or the letter-writers are stupid or silly or anything of the kind—only that a good deal of the opinions you print aren't relevant.

Too many of them are not about anything but the writer's desire to write a letter which will get published and which maybe other fans will vote for, because the first-named writer seems to be a pleasant person and writes entertainingly enough on the fan level. A perfectly good level for fans, but not always good for everyone.

When a letter has something to say, when the writer wants to question or criticize or discuss something, then I'm all in favor of it—even if what he'd saying doesn't seem too important to me.

Let's take a look at the letters in the November issue.

Leading off, we have Lester del Rey, with just the kind of letter you *should* publish. First of all, it's relevant to something in the magazine and to science fiction; second, it's an interesting discussion. I'm not in agreement but that is not important. Since I'm too lazy to enter the argu-

ment I'll just try telepathing del Rey and hope that he's more sensitive to thought-waves than you are.

Next we have Val Walker, who seems like a pleasant guy and who writes a reasonably literate letter—but it's not about anything important enough to devote all that space to. He makes one point which may be of interest—but you could just as easily have mentioned the point itself and answered it without running the entire letter. Sure, it starts off with praise, and I suppose I like to see praise in letters, too—like to feel that I'm not the only one who enjoys the magazine. But praise alone isn't enough.

Next we have Mr. Vendelmans. Why couldn't you have just mentioned his request, or excerpted the single paragraph? I don't see that publishing the entire letter was necessary in order to accommodate the gentleman—an accommodation I'm in favor of, let me add.

Follows the final round from the editors of Theosophical Notes. Lord be praised! Can't you, *can't you please!*, spare your long-suffering readers these ultimate gestures of utter fairness? One such letter would have been too much for me, but one would at least have established the fact that you wanted to give everyone a square deal. Let the prolific gentleman—who, I must admit, writes very well—sound off in the Theosophical publications, of which there must be sufficient. Maybe I'm wrong, but the fact that other readers haven't taken up the argument one way or another suggests to me that most of us aren't interested.

Then a short but to-the-point letter from Mr. Schroepel. My congratulations, sir: you had one point to make, one question to ask, and you asked it.

And now, something preserve us, diabetics returns—as dull as before. Have mercy on us, we readers who were selected as victims because a clever author figured that nuts who liked this science fiction and fantasy stuff would swallow anything if it were just made to sound scientific enough, and managed to hypnotize an otherwise excellent and discerning editor into being his mouthpiece for awhile. (You were one of the few science fiction editors who weren't taken in, if I remember right.) The diabetics boys, I'm sure, are not without their own channels; have mercy on the faithful science fictionist, who doesn't buy *Future* to read arguments about who cured whom, with what, when and how.

In short—just the thing to say at the end of a long letter, eh?—let the letters come as they come. No matter what you offer—unless you offer something really tremendous, which you couldn't—you won't make anyone write in who doesn't feel like it. So hand out the originals to conventions and all that sort of thing, run letters that have something to say or discuss, and forget about the ratings on "Down to Earth";

better three interesting letters that have something to say, than ten that go on and on over nothing.

—address withheld by request

I like to think that my Null-A studies had a great deal to do with my spotting the absurdities in Hubbard's book, but sometimes I wonder if I wouldn't have been misled momentarily had it not been for a curious coincidence—the kind which would never go in fiction. It happened that just before reading "Dianetics", I had finally gotten around to a long-delayed persual of "Mein Kampf". Hitler's oft-times fascinating rhetoric was still rattling around my skull, you might say, and the resemblance of Hubbard's rhetoric struck me so forcefully that his mesmerizing style had no effect. Or rather, not the affect intended by the author.

UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE YEAR

by Paul Mittelbuscher A/3c

Dear Bob,

...In the book-review department you'll find some interesting comments by Damon Knight". ...Those words are your own, the opening stanza of "Down To Earth" in your Nov. issue. Robert, my friend, I term that the understatement of the year. Perhaps you may recall an earlier letter of mine in which I expressed my scorn for the "book reviewer". ...In the past, I've clung steadfastly to the idea that such departments were a waste of space. I'd seldom found such worthy of the expenditure of time necessary to read them; invariably they, like a bad long-playing record, sang the same nauseating aria: "This book is by a big name SF writer. ...It is Science Fiction. ...Therefore get it." But Knight, to whom I convey my apologies, has with keen insight, with imagination, and a quality of literary judgment too seldom found, managed to make intelligent and comprehensive analyses of the fiction in "Future Tense". ...A toast to Damon Knight; he has said something and said it well. One feels that Damon likes his work, for it is painstaking and noteworthy. His evaluation of Blish was most enlightening, a "guided tour" of a writer's mind. I can honestly say that *never* have I been so pleased with a reviewer before.

[Turn To Page 86]

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FUTURE Science Fiction

...I, who haughtily ignored previous like features, read Knight's brilliant effort, three (3) times...need I say more?

For some reason, I am unaccountably pleased with this specific issue of *Future*; I can't remember the occasion when I've read a better one. One might accuse me of being biased, since I frankly admit to all fellow-fans that, in my weighty opinion, you are without par as an editor; but this doesn't explain this satisfied "Gosh that was a good one" feeling. Perhaps it was the wonderful Schomburg cover; the excellent fictional contribution of Charles De Vet; Bob Madle's superb column; Knight's (and Crossen's) book reviews, perhaps... perhaps it was a combination of all the aforementioned items. At any rate I feel congratulations, back-patting, handshaking, flagwaving and the like is the order of the day. Accept my deepest appreciation for the entertainment and enjoyment Vol. 4 No. 4 of *Future* afforded me.

Robert Shekley who has been slumping lately—not in number of sales but in quality thereof—girded his loins and produced "Ultimatum", a superior piece of writing. Particularly liked the manner in which Shekley presented Grimsche; a good story. Wilson's series, clearly derived from his news-wire experiences, was entertaining; this portion read muchly like a big slick "boy-meets-girl saga..." "Counter Irritant" wasn't up to Gordon Dickson's usual standard—but even an inferior Dickson yarn makes for fine reading. "Come-back" was most ably done; apparently Richardson is well-aware of fandom. I was amused at "Alvin Winters" a prototype of a "follower"; we have some "Alvins" among us....reminds me of a Van Vogt devotee I once knew...

I have become increasingly aware that an unheralded writer named Charles De Vet is the possessor of a vast amount of originality, a new "slant", or a viewing-of-things-from-different-angle type of talent. His stories have a certain touch; he literally drops the reader into a storm, a vortex of happenings; before one is aware of it one assumes the place of a central character (not always the "hero") and is caught in the mad rush. It's as though one arrives at the theater to find the play well in progress; rather interesting to attempt to determine from the present circumstances of the various characters just what has transpired previously to bring about the conditions now holding sway. De Vet is gifted; he reminds one slightly of Walter M. Miller. "Countercheck" belongs in an Anthology, and may well find its way there.

My opinion on the awarding of original drawings is clearly a matter of personal preference. Be that as it may, I feel it necessary to state here and now that I *approve* wholeheartedly of the "contests" and sincerely hope that you never see fit to drop them. By all means continue the pres-

DOWN TO EARTH

ent policy of awarding originals to deserving letterhacks. On this occasion I cast my vote for Erik Fennell, "Editors, Theosophical Notes," and Val Walker in that order.

Bob Madle's column is so magnificent that any commentary is utterly needless; if you were to put 95 blank pages fore and aft of "Inside Science Fiction" I would still be happy to pay a quarter for it.

I believe Tom Beecham should be tried as a cover artist. Of course as long as you can obtain Schomburg's...well, Alex is in a class by himself. L-O-V-E that guy.

Future is one pulp I hope stays with us a long, long time. These digest-sized items too often prove that good things do not come in small packages.

—AF 17376 007, 501st Air Base Sqdn,
O'Hare International Airport,
Park Ridge, Illinois.

That's right—Par never was an editor. . . Knight seems to be getting more and more recognition, and this is all to the good; merciless criticism is just what is most needed in science fiction. Since Damon does it so well, I let him handle that aspect of it and confine my own book-comments, for the most part, to a discussion of the grounds on which a book may be recommended—except where I see none whatever. This isn't the same thing as what you complained of.

NO MYSTERY AT ALL

by Lucius Leeotto

Gentlemen:

Make way for a Student of Nature to furnish philosophy for the questions put by such as R. J. F. Knutson, July issue 1953. The answer is simple logic; there is no mystery, because no mystery is needed. These powers of creation work openly for all who will look and see. The first consideration to look at, is the finding of a common denominator of all life—a something that all life must have, more or less.

We find that all life must take in various light gasses—much too light for other forms of Natural Law to concentrate en-mass, as they have done with the more solid elements. Life must take in, convert and leave deposit of its body to increase the bulk and body of the planet. The laws discovered by Newton will serve to convince, in that every object of material is attracted to every other object of material up to a point of growth where the enlarged

[Turn Page]

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—559 Concord Street, Seattle 8, Wash.

As Alice said, I understand everything except the explanation.

CROSS WITH CROSSEN by Jerry Megahan

Dear Ed:

It's been over a year since you printed my last letter. I'll bet you still get a hearty laugh out of that one.

Concerning the Nov. issue, which was just fair, I would place "Ultimatum" first of a fair lot.

For some reason you never seem to get good Sheckley. If this story had been written by someone else, I would be more enthusiastic; but I prefer the lovely snap endings he usually works out in comparison to things of this sort.

Sheckley sublimated the self-sacrifice of the Nam to Grimsche's pathological enemy-complex superbly, the result complimenting dashing.

Otherwise, "Ultimatum" had few virtues. Second comes "Counterecheck," another one of De Vet's almost-monotonous hunter-into-hunted and vice-versa stories. Fortunately, De Vet's almost-constant practice at this sort of thing has given him some facility for it. In the hands of a lesser author it would be all pretty ridiculous.

Thirdly "Counter-Irritant," a good idea unappreciably handled. Dickson does have his strengths, tho, and he seldom goes off a real clinker.

[Turn To Page 90]

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FUTURE Science Fiction

"Comeback" really should rate higher than fourth, because I honestly enjoyed it; but it had little more than a clever ending.

Last, but not actually that bad, is "New Weapon". It reminded me of something the Sat. Eve. Post would label Science Fiction. Slick and very shallow.

The verdict is a nothing issue—nothing bad, nothing good.

The letters were much of a muchness, with nothing much to comment on.

Pics to Lester del Rey, with whom I concur; Eric Fennel; and Schroepfel's confusing paragraph in that order.

The editorial was merely magnificent. I can't stand Mucky Spleen—tho I'm no Agatha Christie fan, either.

As a parting volley I must mention "Readin' and Writhin'". I've read some obnoxious book reviews in my time but this surpasses any wildest imaginings.

Kendell Foster Crossen is probably the most pompous bore I have ever encountered. He most fervently damns all science fiction writers, most of whom can write rings around him, as an "incestuous (that has interesting overtones), professional daisy chain" that doesn't give a good goddam for the readers and never will. He speaks of a shadowy group of "real" writers, who could right all these unknown wrongs—if the editors would only get out of the way.

He hails Bradbury as one of those who evaded the daisies (alias J. W. Campbell) and succeeded.

The main thing wrong with this theory is (1) Bradbury was an acti-fan for a good many years and may therefore be accorded a position on Crossen's dirty list and (2) Does not write precisely science fiction, anyhow and so has not beaten the daisy-chain, but merely slid around it.

He also has decided that Bradbury should get out of s-f, whereas Bradbury himself has stated that he is sick of this sort of advice.

He goes on, delightfully misusing terminology, ending up with a shot at all young writers who are not, in his opinion, poets of the pen similar to Bradbury. All very erudite, of course.

As Damon Knight would say, "Try bicarbonate of soda."

As for Knight himself, I enjoy him—though I have long since decided that he won't give a review unless the author (1) is a friend or (2) bribes him.

As an example, the only story which gets much praise or attention in "Future Tense" is by his old buddy, James Blish. Granted the story is of novella length, and probably very good—but I'm reasonably certain that even if it had been a short-short, it would have received more than passing notice from Knight.

This is probably what Crossen considers a typical daisy-chain tactic, though it is most likely inadvertent.

In conclusion I shall say that I'm expect-

[Turn To Page 92]

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FUTURE Science Fiction

ing to have a bomb thrown through the front window by a Manning Draco-phile; but never-the-less I would not miss Crossen if he would go back to his first love, detective fiction, which I'm told he can't write, either.

—9644 Naomi Avenue, Arcadia, California

Hmm, since the contrast between the Nam's and Grimsche's type of attitude was the whole point of the story, or at least the most important point in “Ultimatum”, I don't exactly get your complaint about a lack of other virtues. Or do you mean that the story didn't make much headway as a story? . . . Let's you and Crossen fight; I'll count the bullet-holes.

WHAT SAY, MR. LATHAM? by Carol McKinney

Dear Bob:

The Nov. *Future* was very unusual in its lineup of stories—four of them tied for first place, as far as I'm concerned anyway. The other one, “Counter-Irritant”, placed automatically last, even though it was slightly above average. So what does that indicate? That *Future* is getting better stories all the time! Already it's one of the leading pulps, and if it continues to improve like it has this year—

There seems to be a serious discrepancy in the novellet by De Vet, “Countercheck”. If this Jeske was as brilliant as he was described, he should have already known the solution before the story even started. (Yes, I know—then there wouldn't have been any story!) But it was a weak point to have him wait until all hope had fled, and he was cornered, before the simple solution to all the Earth's and his problems popped into his suddenly lucid mind. Do you see what I mean, or don't you agree?

“Inside SF” was again very interesting and informative. Everyone who reads it will be overjoyed to see that it will now become a regular feature. The new fanzine column is one that has been very neglected up to now. Glad to see it. If anyone objects that the space could be better used for more stories, just remind them that there are over 30 sf mags on the stands today with hundreds of thousands of words in stories alone—while good articles and features are sadly lacking in most publications. If certain features aren't interesting to them they don't have anyone standing beside them with a club; they aren't forced to read the boring sentences. And they never stop to consider that these features are a welcome break in the stories once in awhile.

[Turn To Page 94]

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FUTURE Science Fiction

"Comeback" was particularly interesting
and if forced to choose a definite story for
first place this would be it. I'm curious to
know why Mr. Latham thinks that all fe-
male fen are either very smart or very
stupid. By the same logic then, all male
fen would either be geniuses or morons,
right? And that's no logic at all—for a
moron just doesn't have the necessary
brainpower to enjoy stf, especially some of
the heavier science stories. Anybody want
to continue this argument? All fen have a
more than normal imagination and cu-
riosity about the unknown—but I wouldn't
say there was a sharp distinction between
very high and very low IQ's, with those in
the average section missing entirely. Tain't
possible.

You can print all the letters from Edi-
tors, Authors and Mystical Societies you
want to, but we don't have to vote for
them, especially when they are so
l-o-o-n-g! We like to see letters from the
fen, and I'm sure you wouldn't take up all
the space for 2 or 3 extra-length missives
from as many of them, disregarding about
7 or 8 other, perhaps more interesting,
shorter ones, now would you? Why, then, do
you do the same for those of the Big
Names? Perhaps one or two each time
would be different, but not every time!
Very glad to see that the body-fluids have
flowed for the last time, via Down to
Earth, by those Theosophical Notes fakirs.

It certainly is too bad that the fen in
other countries can't get our top-notch stf
mags very often. Maybe someday, when all
the difficulties over the various mediums
of exchange are satisfactorily solved, things
will be different. Until then, everyone who
has no further use for their mags should
send them overseas to those who cannot get
them otherwise. How would you feel if
you had only 1 or 2 stf mags a month to
read—or perhaps only that many in 6
months?

You are wondering whether or not to
continue to award originals to the letter-
writers? Is there any reason why you
should discontinue giving them away? The
only ones who would vote against this prac-
tice are those who are disgruntled over not
winning. By all means, keep up this cus-
tom! If someone isn't interested in receiv-
ing his original, after fairly winning it, he
should let you know when he first writes
the letter—then you won't count any votes
for him, but just those for someone who is
interested.

Very nice cover this time.

—385 No. 8th East St., Provo, Utah

The point, Carol, is that all these lit-
tle things, such as originals to letter-
writers, require extra time on my part.
I have to see to it that the originals
are put in a safe place and organized
so that particular ones can be found

DOWN TO EARTH

in the jungle that we laughingly call my editorial office, when the time comes. Things just pile up, and the Things make a hash of order even when I don't. Now, as I've said before, a lot of these extras are more or less labor of love on my part—labor which I consider well-rewarded when the readers or fans seem to want them and take advantage of them. But for some time letter-writers have either delayed many months in letting me know what originals they wanted, or have not bothered to contact me at all on the subject.

Meanwhile, someone writes, or phones, or comes around and inquires if we have any originals for conventions, conferences, confabs, and what-not. Well, the originals are here, and any which haven't been selected are free to hand out to conventions, etc. Only things got to such a point that several times, this year, I've forgotten just where they stood when someone came around to ask for originals, and have given away pictures which winners later—often much later asked for. I don't expect every letter-writer to pick up each new issue the moment it appears, and make his selection within twenty-four hours; but when it came to months between the appearance of the notice and a communication about an original won (as well as many never writing in at all about them) I began to wonder if the practice was really worth the effort necessary to keep the setup in reasonable order.

ANENT THE CIRCLE by George Nims Raybin

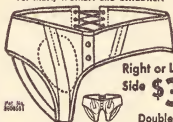
Dear Mr. Lowndes,

Your decision to continue, as a regular department, the column "Inside Science Fiction" by Robert A. Madle in both *Future* and *Dynamic* has now prompted me to write you. I concur, as I believe your other readers will.

[Turn Page]

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 We meet on the 2nd Sunday of the month
 at Werderman's Hall, 16th Street and
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Here's the plug, and I hope a good-
 ly amount of interested and interesting
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 Holyoke, Mass. for October 1, 1953.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher,
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 are: Publisher, Louis H. Silberkleit, 241 Church
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Sworn to and subscribed before me this 28th day
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THE RECKONING

A Report on Your
Votes and Comments

Our sympathies to Richard Wilson, who received the only brick thrown at any of the authors, this time. However, seeing his story in the place position may ease the pain. Surprise of the polling, however (to me, at least) was the showing of De Vet whose novelet received nothing lower than a 3rd place vote, and who pulled in the top ratings 2 to 1. Also interesting was the case of Mr. Dickson, who received neither a first place nor a last place vote.

Frankly, I was astonished at the diversity of response to Sheckley, although his last-place votes were balanced by first-placers. Since the editor, of course, is infallible, it must be that a lot of you didn't get the point. (Seriously, the story was controversial, and only two voters failed to give the story either a "1" or a "5"; those two rated it "2" and "4".)

1. Countercheck (De Vet)	1.31
2. New Weapon (Wilson)	2.82
3. Ultimatum (Sheckley)	3.11
4. Comeback (Latham)	3.25
5. Counter-Irritant (Dickson)	3.50

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General Comment

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